The New Criterion

January 2005

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

Notes & Comments, 1
Oxford's new "Dictionary of National Biography" *by Roger Kimball*, 4
Butler's unhappy youth *by Anthony Daniels*, 11
Jane Austen, anti-Jacobin *by Judy Stove*, 18
Morisot & Manet *by Jeffrey Meyers*, 26
New poems *by Joshua Harmon & Neil Azevedo*, 32

Reconsiderations: Conrad's Latin America *by Mark Falcoff*, 35;
Art: Photography's painter *by Karen Wilkin*, 40; Gallery chronicle *by James Panero*, 44; **Music:** New York chronicle *by Jay Nordlinger*, 47; **Opera note:** Rodelinda *by Patrick J. Smith*, 52; **The media** *by James Bowman*, 53
Books: *Tom Wolfe* I am Charlotte Simmons *reviewed by Brooke Allen*, 61; *Christopher Hibbert* Disraeli: a personal history *reviewed by David Pryce-Jones*, 64; *Richard Rhodes* John James Audubon *reviewed by Michael J. Lewis*, 66; *Paul Goldberger* Up from zero *reviewed by Francis Morrone*, 69; **Shorter notices**, 72;
Notebook: The last great Fair *by Jeffrey Hart*, 74; **Letters**, 79

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The New Criterion *January 2005*

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Notes & Comments: January 2005

The Barnes Foundation, RIP

It is last-act time for the Barnes Foundation, the art school that the pharmaceutical magnate Albert C. Barnes founded in the 1920s in Merion, Pennsylvania, a plush suburb of Philadelphia. Last month, Judge Stanley Ott approved a request by the trustees of the Barnes Foundation to move most of the school's $6-billion collection of art to downtown Philadelphia where it could be more effective fodder for tourists. In an editorial on the decision, *The New York Times* called Judge Ott's decision "an act of judicial common sense." In our view, it was an act of judicial usurpation, the final—or at any rate the latest—indignity for an institution that has struggled mightily since Barnes's death in 1951 to preserve its independence, curatorial as well as financial. The fact that the indignity might well have become inevitable—largely, we think, because the Barnes Foundation has been grossly mismanaged for more than a decade—only adds insult to the injury.

As long-time readers of *The New Criterion* know, we have several times had occasion to reflect on the tangled history of the Barnes Foundation (see, for example, Roger Kimball's "Betraying a Legacy: The Case of the Barnes Foundation" in our June 1993 issue). The story forms a cautionary tale, with two sets of morals: one cultural, the other practical or prudential.

The cultural moral has to do with the perils of individuality. The governing imperative? Conform. We live at a moment when art is more and more exploited as a commercial resource: a lever to boost "urban renewal" and enhance city coffers and social-cultural pretensions. What is wanted is art that appeals to and can be disseminated to as many people as possible. Hence, homogeneity is the order of the day. Every urban center must have its "arts complex," and every arts complex must be basically the same (apart, of course, from such incidentals as the contents of the collection). Restaurants, gift shops, tours for schoolchildren, parties and receptions and fund-raising events. "Access" is the code-word but "box-office receipts" names the real goal. Anything that opposes this force is dismissed as "elitist," "idiosyncratic," "out-of-touch," or just plain reactionary. Roberta Smith, a writer on art for *The New York Times*, epitomized the reigning sensibility in an article celebrating Judge Ott's decision. "Many have compared the Barnes relocation to dismantling the Frick Collection and moving it up the street to the Met," she wrote. "But who wouldn't enjoy seeing some of the Frick's great paintings—Bellini's St. Francis, Vermeer's laughing girl—free of the trappings of Henry Clay Frick's robber-baron lifestyle?"

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"Robber-baron lifestyle"? Let's see, would that be the magnificent building designed by Carrère & Hastings and John Russell Pope? Perhaps it is the sumptuous integration of art and domestic splendor that the Frick's curators have managed to preserve? Or maybe it is the thrilling intimacy that has made the Frick a favorite retreat for art lovers the world over? In any event, to answer Ms. Smith's question, we wouldn't. And neither would Albert Barnes. Barnes had over the years formulated a complex vision of art that stressed aesthetics on the one hand, and pedagogical or political possibility on the other. It was a vision that required concentration, leisure, and first-hand experience of works of art. Barnes believed that the power of art depended primarily on its *aesthetic* qualities—such things as line, color, form, and texture. Hence he arranged his collection to highlight formal, not chronological, geographical, or cultural continuities. He limited attendance both to protect his students and to enhance the experience of visitors. He eschewed wall labels and those little exercises in social history that most exhibitions today feature: the introductory sermonettes that tell viewers what to think about the artist or artists in question. Barnes wasn't interested in telling people what to think. He wanted to induce them to feel, to experience, *for themselves.*

In this context, it is worth noting that although Barnes was deeply interested in art, his first passion was education. Barnes looked to art and aesthetic experience as a means of educating the human spirit in modern democratic society. In the Indenture of Trust that created his foundation, Barnes noted that he was particularly keen that "plain people, that is, men and women who make their livelihood by daily toil in shops, factories, schools, stores, and similar places," have free access to the sustenance that art offers.

The Barnes Foundation is often referred to as a "museum." It is not—not yet, anyway. It is a school. True, it happens to own some 2,500 works of art, most of it of the highest quality. But the fact remains that Albert Barnes used his money and his property to start an educational institution, not an art museum. Indeed, he loathed the art establishment of his time and deliberately set out to create an institution that would adhere to other principles and pursue different ends. Among other things, he stipulated that the collection not be moved, that pictures not be lent, that the foundation not be used for "society functions commonly designated receptions, tea parties, dinners, banquets, dances, musicales, or similar affairs," etc. In order to secure the character of his foundation, Barnes went to great lengths to formulate a bullet-proof indenture.

It turned out, however, that it was not lawyer-proof. The Barnes Foundation is an unusual institution at a time when only the usual will do. At least since the mid-1950s, there have been attempts to transform it into an art museum, to move it to Philadelphia, to merge it with the Philadelphia Museum of Art: anything but let it exist for the purpose that Albert Barnes intended. Some of the pressure came from Merion residents who didn't like the traffic the Barnes attracted. Some of it came from rival art collectors. Some of it was internal, the result of mismanagement, especially under the disastrous watch of Richard H. Glanton in the 1990s.

The reward for the Barnes's capitulation is $150 million that the Pew Charitable Trusts and other foundations have pledged to raise in order to rescue the nearly bankrupt institution—on the condition that the Barnes Foundation move to Philadelphia and transform itself into an art museum. In other words, the Barnes Foundation will be "saved" if its current masters agree to violate the dearest wishes of its founder. Which brings us to the second, prudential, part of this admonitory tale. As Leslie Lenkowsky noted in a thoughtful piece in *The Wall Street Journal*, Judge Ott's decision "sends a cautionary signal not just to those who are

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collectors, but also to anyone who is considering making a carefully thought-out bequest." One likely result is more legal meddling whenever the purposes of a donation are politically or socially or culturally unpopular. Another likely result, as Mr. Lenkowsky delicately put it, is "greater caution on the part of donors about making unusual or potentially controversial bequests." In other words, *caveat donator.*

Rise of the indoctrinologists

In 2000, the psychiatrist and public-affairs commentator Sally Satel published *PC M.D.: How Political Correctness is Corrupting Medicine.* She showed how an ethic of political activism was infiltrating the practice of American medicine. Increasingly, she argued, the demands of political correctness were "blurring the boundaries between scholarship and political action," subordinating effective treatment to the demand for social reform. One consequence was the rising popularity of the idea that disease is the result not of pathogens but of "racism," "inequality," or "oppression." An official at Brown University's Department of Community Health, for example, assured her readers that AIDS is a "biological expression of social inequality." At the same time, such "indoctrinologists" (in Dr. Satel's apt coinage) reject standard hygienic practices. She cites the case of a public health nurse who instructed mothers in infant hygiene and was for her pains remembered "as a kind of surreptitious agent of the police, insinuating bourgeois ideals into the authentic culture of the working class." No, we are not making this up. Indoctrinologists are not the only voices heard in the medical establishment. But neither are they fringe figures. "They now sit at the helm of professional associations and hold impressive posts in schools of public health," Dr. Satel points out. "They have changed medical school admission criteria and have infiltrated respected academic journals."

We thought of Dr. Satel's sobering book when a friend sent us news of recent changes at *The New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the most venerable and authoritative organs of the medical establishment. Go back a year or two, and you will find a journal devoted to such topics as "Minor Histocompatibility Antigens and Marrow Transplantation" (February 1, 1996) or "Paraneoplastic Cerebellar Ataxia Due to Autoantibodies against a Glutamate Receptor" (January 6, 2000). More and more, however, the indoctrinologists are taking over. There are still plenty of reassuringly technical articles. But there are also more and more articles that replace medical with social issues. The December 16, 2004 issue, for example, carries pieces on "Confronting Genocide in Sudan," violence in Colombia, South America, and the left-wing group of physician-activists Médecins sans Frontières and its decision to leave Afghanistan and Iraq lest they become part of "the collateral damage in the 'war on terrorism.'" (Note the scare quotes, as if the war on terror were merely a pretext for some more insidious activity.)

The rise of indoctrinologists in some of the most prestigious precincts of the American medical establishment is a worrisome trend. As elsewhere, the triumph of political correctness in medicine will result in a lowering of standards and a willingness to barter uncomfortable truths for political expediency. But scientific and technical progress is built not on fictions, no matter how reassuring, but on truth. At best, as Dr. Satel notes, the actions of the indoctrinologists

> create distractions and waste money; at worst, they interfere with effective treatment. Although the activists themselves may end up feeling better, gratified to have taken part in the struggle for social justice, they undermine the Hippocratic ideal: the *patient* comes first.

The Gospel of Luke has some good advice: "physician, heal thyself."

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Gallimaufry & more: "The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography"

by Roger Kimball

Of the many things I admire about the Victorians—their moral passion, their elevated patriotism, their extraordinary cultural and political and scientific achievements—perhaps what I admire most is their energy. We all know about Anthony Trollope, who (as he tells us in his *Autobiography*) sat writing with a clock before him in order to keep himself up to the self-imposed quota of 250 words per quarter-hour. After correcting the previous day's work, Trollope turned out about 2,500 words between the hours of 6:30 and 9:00 A.M., when he set off for his *real* job at the Post Office. And this Trollope did day in and day out, week after week, month after month, year after year. One day he finished a novel before 9:00. He got down a fresh sheet of paper and began a new one. "It's a sheer matter of industry," he confided when asked how he managed to write so much. "It's not the head that does it—it's the cobbler's wax on the seat and the sticking to my chair!"

Trollope's is a celebrated story. But it is far from atypical. Consider Dickens. Consider Walter Bagehot. He died when he was fifty-one, but his collected works run to fifteen large volumes. Consider Herbert Spencer or Charles Darwin or John Ruskin: you need a long ruler to measure the shelf space their collected works occupy. Whatever else it was, the Victorian genius was a genius for productive labor. How did they do it? How did James Murray, with only the most modest of staffs, manage to bring *The Oxford English Dictionary* into the world? And how—to come to the most spectacular example of Victorian scholarship—how did Leslie Stephen manage to produce the *Dictionary of National Biography*?

Today, alas, Leslie Stephen is known to many (to the extent that he is known at all) solely as the father of Virginia Woolf. But Stephen's claim on our attention goes well beyond his paternity of that poster-girl for twentieth-century feminism, department of snobbish literary neurasthenia. Besides, if we're going to bring up relatives, why not start with a genuinely distinguished one. Stephen was also the brother of James Fitzjames Stephen—another prodigy of Victorian literary productivity—whose book *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873) is one of the sharpest and most relentless polemics in the library of philosophical evisceration. Stephen made mincemeat of that bible of libertarian permission, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, a feat for which posterity has repaid him with a combination of neglect and hostility.

But Leslie Stephen (1832–1904) does not need to depend on the reflected glory of any relatives for our attention. He was in his day a celebrated man of letters, author of numerous literary-historical works (for example, the 925-page *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*) and editor of *Cornhill* magazine. Stephen's editorship was not a commercial success, but

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the magazine's owner, George Smith, knew a good thing when he saw it. In 1882, he asked Stephen to edit a new dictionary of biography for his firm, Smith, Elder & Co. What Smith had in mind initially was a worldwide compendium modelled on the forty-volume *Biographie universelle* that had been published in Paris a few decades earlier. Smith recalled that he was saved from that "wild attempt" by the "knowledge and sound judgement" of Stephen. A national biography presented obstacles enough. As Noel Annan noted in *Leslie Stephen: His Thought & Character in Relation to his Time* (1952), Stephen knew that "The past was already littered with the corpses of infant dictionaries which had perished at the tender age of the third or fourth letters of the alphabet."

Stephen was determined to avoid that fate. He planned the dictionary carefully, insisting, for example, that contributors complete their articles within six months. He was fortunate to find an exceptionally able assistant in Sidney Lee (1859–1926). For his part, Smith was prepared to invest £70,000 (about £5 million today) of his own money in the project, out of an estimated total outlay of £150,000. As for determining whom to include, Stephen published a list of names twice yearly in *The Athenaeum* and asked readers to suggest additions. It was then, Annan writes, that

> the nightmare began and letters arrived in dozens. [Stephen] was haunted by families with requests to include obscure relatives. The inevitable clergyman wrote enclosing a list of 1400 hymn-writers each of whom was entitled to a place. Antiquarians and bookworms moved in to the assault.

The Dictionary of National Biography was an extraordinary endeavor—"an undertaking of exceptional magnitude in the history of publishing," as Sidney Lee recalled. A new volume appeared like clockwork every quarter from 1885 to 1900. The labor was incessant. Stephen and Lee had no cadre of Ph.D. students to help them, no research grants, no computers, not even any typewriters. "The damned thing goes on like a diabolical piece of machinery," Stephen complained, "always gaping for more copy, and I fancy at times that I shall be dragged into and crushed out in slips." Eventually, the pressure was too much for his health. In 1889, he collapsed in his London club. In 1891, after the first twenty-six volumes had been published, Lee took over as editor, though Stephen continued to contribute articles. When the first edition was complete, it stood at sixty-three volumes and included 29,120 articles by 654 contributors. It was, as Annan observed, "Stephen's most enduring bequest to posterity." Stephen himself wrote 283 articles—many the length of a short monograph—for the work, Lee an astonishing 820.

As in any such collaborative undertaking, the DNB exhibited considerable variation in the tone and quality of its entries. There were sufficient misprints and factual errors to require a stout volume of corrections in the early 1900s. But what astonishes are not the failings but the achievement. Its excellence was instantly acknowledged. "German and French scholars generously admitted the Dictionary's superiority to their own national compendiums," Annan notes.

> It was an enterprise free of literary log-rolling and of the worst features of seminar research. For Stephen's greatest rule was that each life was to be readable, a biography in itself, not a compendium of sources or a disquisition by a scholar on disputed points.

To this end, Stephen encouraged his contributors to write with verve and personality, not in the impersonal voice of a committee. "Contributors," Annan writes,

> were ridden on the lightest of reins and encouraged to enliven their style. On one occasion this vivacity brought its reward. In writing George Eliot's life Stephen described Tito, the hero of *Romola*, as one of her "finest feminine characters" which drew from a phlegmatic

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> reviewer the comment that presumably Romola herself was meant. [Frederic William] Maitland grimly observed: "A Dictionary should not be strewn with such mantraps."

In 1908–1909, Smith, Elder issued a corrected edition of the DNB in twenty-two volumes, incorporating the three supplementary volumes that had since appeared. In 1917, the Smith family (George Smith had died in 1901) gave up the DNB to the University of Oxford. Since then, Oxford University Press has presided over the dictionary, publishing supplementary volumes at regular intervals (the last appeared in 1996). In 1993, it published an omnibus volume called *Missing Persons*, which included short biographies of some 1000 figures, from Thomas Traherne and Gerard Manley Hopkins to Ronald Firbank, who for various reasons had not made it into the main work or any of the supplements.

Oxford had for some years been contemplating a thoroughgoing revision of the DNB. In 1992, they engaged Colin Matthew, editor of the last twelve volumes of Gladstone's *Diaries*, to undertake this monumental project. Matthew died suddenly in 1999, but the historian Brian Harrison, his successor, stepped in to oversee its completion, and he has done so with dispatch. In September, the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was published in sixty volumes and in an online edition that is available by yearly subscription.[1] It is, in most respects, a publishing triumph that does Stephen and Lee proud. Chronologically, it moves "from the earliest times" through the end of the year 2000. The scope, detail, and rigor of the articles make it, as the editors boast, "the first point of reference for anyone interested in the lives of the peoples of the British Isles and their connections overseas."

The focus of the ODNB (the favored shorthand) is wider than its predecessor, including many more foreigners who either "settled in the British Isles for significant periods or whose visits enabled them to leave a mark on British life." Moreover, Matthew's principle of selection was at least as wide as Stephen's and Lee's: the ODNB is not just a "roll-call of the great and the good," as Matthew put it, "but also a gallimaufry of the eccentric and the bad." Both editions, for example, have entertaining articles on Wild, Jonathan (1682?–1725), a receiver of stolen goods, an informer, and a rogue, and "Catchpole, Margaret (1762–1819), convict and author." Among the rum newcomers in the ODNB is "Smith, George Joseph (1872–1915), bigamist and murderer"—not, I hasten to add, to be confused with G. Smith, proprietor of Smith, Elder & Co—and "Maxwell, (Ian) Robert (1923–1991), publisher and swindler," one of the many splendid contributions of Richard Davenport-Hines ("his egotism was unashamed: the bowl-sized cup from which he drank at his office was marked 'I'M A VERY IMPORTANT PERSON'").

As with the DNB, the sheer size of the ODNB commands attention. Everything about it is large. What we have here are 54,922 articles by 12,550 authors. You will need not only $13,000 (or £7,500) but also twelve feet of shelf space to accommodate these sixty volumes. This is the age of the committee, the administrative bureaucracy, so instead of Stephen, Lee, and their platoons of contributors, we have several regiments deployed. Nicolas Barker, in his piece on the ODNB for the *TLS*, tabulated the arrayed forces. In addition to a "supervising committee" of twenty, there were Matthew and Harrison in field command, thirteen consultant editors, 375 assistant editors, 144 research assistants, three picture editors, nearly 100 support staff, and 300 freelance helpers. Notwithstanding this army of workers, Matthew himself, in an admirably Victorian burst of productivity, wrote or revised 778 entries, among them articles on A. J. Balfour, Edward VIII,

1 *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 volumes, 61,440 pages, $13,000. Access to the online edition is $295 yearly for individual users.

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George V, Florence Nightingale, John Buchan, Gladstone, Harold Macmillan, and (with K. D. Reynolds) Queen Victoria.

The ODNB includes several features not found in the DNB. For one thing, it is illustrated. The editors' introduction tells us that there are just over 10,000 likenesses included in the work, which means that roughly one-fifth of the entries carries an illustration. (The illustrations are included in the online edition as well.) This may seem like a merely cosmetic addition, but it is more than that: being able to put a face to a name is like being able to place a city on a map: it helps one get one's bearings.

The ODNB also boasts much fuller references than its predecessor. What might be a line or two in Stephen's and Lee's day—though that line often included the tantalizing phrase "personal knowledge"—has now generally expanded to a brace of paragraphs that includes many secondary sources, details about archives, and a list of known likenesses. There is also for many biographies from the eighteenth century forward a concluding entry specifying "wealth at death," an estimate that reports the estate's value at probate. Finally, the editors of the ODNB were not stingy with space. In some cases, the articles amount to a short treatise on the subject. In every case I checked, the ODNB article was longer than the corresponding piece in the DNB. The philosopher and divine Joseph Butler gets 8000 words in the ODNB as against 4000 in the DNB. Churchill gets 34,000 words as against 20,000, Henry James 9000 as against 3000. All that seems appropriate, though in some cases—the 20,000 words that Marilyn Butler devotes to Jane Austen, for example—the result is less edifying than embalming. Leslie Stephen's 1500 words on Jane Austen may have been too cursory, but his article did have the virtue of liveliness.

Most of the new articles are written to a high level of scholarship and clarity. Still, one often misses an amusing anecdote or illuminating aside from the DNB. Martin *Stannard*, a biographer of Evelyn Waugh, does a more than respectable job with the novelist, but one does lament the absence of Douglas Woodruff's story that Waugh "told Christopher Sykes that he looked with horror upon Dylan Thomas . . . who in looks, dress, and conversation was in many ways a parody of Waugh: 'He's exactly what I would have been if I had not become a Catholic.'" P. M. S. Hacker's 14,000-word article on Ludwig Wittgenstein is very professional, but it is hard to beat G. H. von Wright's summary from the DNB:

> He was a man of forceful and unusual personality, who could not fail to make an impression upon everyone who knew him. His life was an unending journey in search of truth. Doubt was the moving force within him, and discussion one of his chief means of travel. It was in the nature both of his character and of his philosophy to raise questions rather than to answer them. He seldom looked back on his earlier views, and when he did so it was usually to repudiate them.

One of the most valuable editorial decisions Matthew made was not an innovation but a conservation. Every subject from the previous edition of the DNB is included in the ODNB. No one has been left out. Most articles have been completely rewritten; some have been revised, in which case the notation "*rev.*" follows the author's name. (Speaking of abbrievations, the ODNB is in love with them. Many know that ANZAC is the "Australian and New Zealand Army Corps," but who knows that ASDIC is the "Antisubmarine Detection Investigation Committee." Is "ASDIC" useful?)

The greatest innovation in the ODNB is its online edition. I was told by one Oxford official that the Press even considered forgoing the paper edition altogether. The Press canvassed its likely clients, however, and in the end decided to print 5000-odd sets. (Harvard bought two copies, Yale three.) Most users, I suspect, will experience the ODNB chiefly online. (Someday, I suppose, maybe even someday soon, a "press" will have nothing to with ink and type and printing presses: a sad thought.)

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With a broadband connection, access to the database is plenty speedy. And a lot of thought has clearly gone into the design of the web site. The search engine is flexible: Matthew; Colin Matthew; Matthew, Colin; or H. C. G. Matthew all get you the desired biography. "Lord Grey" brings up thirty-two entries. "Eric Blair" or "George Orwell" gets you the author of *1984*. "Tweedsmuir" gets you the author of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (John Buchan became the first Baron Tweedsmuir toward the end of his life). Results are displayed in alphabetical order by default, but a single click will sort according to birth date, death date, or reverse the order of the sort. Users can also limit searches by sex, year, place, family, and numerous "fields of interest" ("agriculture and food," "armed services and intelligence," "art," "business and finance," etc.).

The ODNB includes articles not only on individuals but also on scores of themes. There are, for example, articles on the 1964 election (when Harold Wilson's Labor Party ended thirteen years of Conservative rule), Disraeli's bicentenary (which occurred on December 21, 2004), England's loss of Normandy in 1204, and "Myth, legend, and mystery in the Oxford DNB." In the last named, we learn that the oft-related "fact" that Robin Hood was the only mythical personage included in the DNB "is itself part myth." It turns out (as Sidney Lee had informed readers) that there were eleven legendary figures in the original DNB, including Merlin, King Arthur, and the dragon-slaying Guy of Warwick. The ODNB adds several more, including John Bull "(supp. fl. 1712–2000), fictitious epitomist of Englishness and British imperialism" and even Joan Bull: "(supp. fl. 1928–1946), fictitious epitomist of enfranchised women, the analogue of John Bull, was created by the cartoonist David Low (1891–1963) to symbolize the women aged between twenty-one and thirty who obtained the vote in 1928 despite opposition from the 'diehard dimwits'—clear precursors of Low's Colonel Blimp."

When you bring up an article, the window is divided in two. The article itself occupies most of the screen but a narrow panel on the left lists the name, dates, and occupation of the person discussed, followed by the name of the article's author. Clicking the author's name instantly brings up a list of all the articles he has contributed to the ODNB. (It also tells you the total number of articles he has contributed.) Beneath the author's name are section titles of the article. Clicking one of these advances to the specified section in the main window. The left panel also lists any names that are cross-referenced in the article. Again, a single click on the highlighted name, from the body of the article or the left panel, takes you to the specified article.

At the bottom of the left panel in many of the articles is the phrase "DNB archive." Click this and a new window opens with the original DNB article on the person selected. The author of the article and date it was published are listed in the left panel. The entire DNB is accessible in this way, which makes it possible to compare old and new with the click of a mouse button.

With the ODNB, sophisticated internet-based publishing has definitively entered the mainstream. This is a resource you can use and enjoy, not just experiment with. It also makes correction easier: Oxford currently plans to make emendations and updates thrice yearly, which means that most typos and other errors are likely to be fixed soon. Of course there is room for improvement. One administrative nuisance is that your session expires after a relatively brief period of inactivity. This means that you have to continually re-login to the site. The search facility could also be friendlier. Users of Google know that if you type "Geroge Washington" the clever software will ask you "Did you mean 'George Washington'?" The ODNB does not provide anything like this convenience, nor does it "remember" search terms. So if you do query "Geroge Washington," it takes you to an "item not found" page and leaves the search box blank, which means that you have to retype

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the query instead of simply correcting a typo. Finally, it would be useful if there was an easy means to adjust the size of the type, especially for the articles retrieved from the DNB, which are displayed in smaller type than articles from the ODNB.

Almost by definition, a contemporary academic project is going to exhibit a left-liberal, politically correct bias. What is surprising is not that the ODNB bears some marks of this *déformation professionelle* but how little, in general, such concessions to political piety detract from its authority and usefulness. Of course there are exceptions. As John Gross notes in his essay for the *TLS* on the handling of literature in the ODNB, toward the end of a 35,000-word article on Shakespeare, Peter Holland suddenly erupts against "right-wing Conservative politicians like Michael Portillo" who "returned with mechanical frequency to Ulysses's speech on degree in *Troilus and Cressida* as 'proof' that Shakespeare supported the hierarchies and institutions tories were committed to maintain." Take Lady T. away, and hark what discord follows.

There are other problem spots. For example, Jonathan Haslam describes the Communist historian E. H. Carr (1892–1982), as "fervently individualist, ferociously intelligent, and scrupulously honest." But in fact Carr was a model of intellectual mendacity, a man who metamorphized overnight from being an apologist for Hitler to being an abject supporter of Stalin. As George Orwell wrote in 1944, "all the appeasers, e.g. Professor E. H. Carr, have switched their allegiance from Hitler to Stalin. The servility of the so-called intellectuals is astonishing." Haslam presents Carr as a moral hero. But David Pryce-Jones, writing in these pages in 1999, was right that Carr was a "sinister man" who "did more than his fair share to mislead public opinion" and who, had Hitler or Stalin prevailed, "would have had no trouble at all signing death warrants in a police state."

Something similar must be said about Eric Hobsbawm's comically laudatory, indeed, hagiographical article about Karl Marx. One of Leslie Stephen's most beneficent rules was that the temptation to eulogy must be resisted. Alfred Ainger (who contributed articles on Charles and Mary Lamb, Tennyson, and George du Maurier to the DNB) summed up the attitude: there were to be "No flowers by request." What Hobsbawm has given us is a veritable nursery full of blossoms. Citing Engels, he presents Marx as "the Darwin of the law of human historical evolution, the path-breaker for humanity's future." This prodigy was "a major figure in the history of philosophy, economics, sociology, and historiography, though he cannot be adequately contained under any of these headings," someone whose "sheer intellectual superiority" guaranteed both the unparalleled brilliance of his work and the lamentable envy of his contemporaries. *The Communist Manifesto*, Hobsbawm says, is an "irresistible [!] combination of utopian confidence, moral passion, hard-edged analysis, and—not least—a dark literary eloquence," while Marx's "practical impact" is nothing less than cause for celebration: "within little more than fifty years of his death," Hobsbawm proudly announces, "regimes officially devoted to Marxism ruled a third of the human race, without counting the many millions who lived under the governments of social democratic parties, many of which also claimed direct descent from him." Indeed. And in those regimes untold millions perished in gulags and police cellars or suffered horrific poverty and oppression, all for the sake of realizing Marx's "utopian confidence." The one gratifying item in Hobsbawm's preposterous article was the report of Marx's "wealth at death": £250.

As far as I have been able to tell, such egregious lapses are rare in the ODNB. The work exhibits a prevailing aroma of political correctness, but it mostly pools around certain predictable issues. The biggest cause is the feminist cause. It was a source of profound unhappiness that, notwithstanding recent efforts at redress, the total number of women in the DNB hovered around 5 percent. Accordingly, for the last decade the

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British Isles and their dependencies, past and present, have been assiduously trawled for sentient females of discernible public accomplishment. The result has been to push the total number of women up to about 10 percent. That figure is still grounds for misery and hand-wringing, and we will doubtless see more and more articles like Margaret Pelling's reflections on medicine and biography, which opens with a section on—what else?—"Women and medicine." Some strides have been made, Pelling admits, but we all need "to go further: to extend beyond practitioners to recognize fully the innumerable female relatives of medical men who inspired medical careers, who supported the male practitioner with their earned or unearned income, or who actively contributed to his work," etc., etc. Why not the charwomen who emptied the doctors' wastebaskets and cleaned the surgery: is not that a hitherto unacknowledged contribution to medical practice? I offer it as a subject for further research.

Works like the ODNB are intended primarily to be sources of information. And this they undoubtedly are. But, if they are any good, they are also sources of fun. One consults them when in need of a fact. One browses when in need of diversion or entertainment. The ODNB is no less rich in the latter department than the former. The poet and critic William Empson led an interesting life. But so, it appears, did his wife Hetta: "She posed nude for Felix Topolski, who remembered that Hetta, not having done it before, 'trembled all over reclination at first, thus implanting flesh-awareness on to her remarkable South African-moulded monumentality. With the years she developed her innate dominance—an impressive stomping far from motherly personage.'"

For the reviewer of reference works, the greatest joy comes from discovering mistakes, solecisms, omissions. In a work of the scope of the ODNB, such blemishes are inevitable. I am told that there are a clutch of errors on the subject of English music. Nikolai Tolstoy, the stepson of the novelist Patrick O'Brian, wrote a blistering letter to the *TLS* charging that the ODNB was "thoroughly slipshod" and "based on very dubious standards of scholarship" because there are numerous errors in its article on his step-father. But Patrick O'Brian was famously a fantasist who made up many details of his life, and Tolstoy, when asked to confirm various facts in the ODNB article, refused to cooperate. Colin Matthew was a scrupulous scholar, but *dormitat Homerus*. In the course of his long and informative article on Harold Macmillan, Matthew describes Macmillan's wedding at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on April 21, 1920: "the bride's side [was] packed with peers, the groom's with publishers and authors who wrote for Macmillans, including six OMs led by Henry James and Thomas Hardy." Now James was a famously social creature, but even he would have found it difficult to have made that engagement, on account of the nuisance of having died in 1916. On balance, though, these are small things, easily corrected, especially in the online edition.

More problematic, perhaps, are the rules for inclusion. As John Gross pointed out, if the ODNB includes Ezra Pound (as it surely should) it should also include Robert Frost. Frost was in London from 1912 to early 1915, during which time he published two important books, *A Boy's Will* and *North of Boston*. Everyone will have his own list of missing persons. Yet in the end what may be more worrisome is not who is missing but who is included, and how. Standards for inclusion in the ODNB have become increasingly demotic. Do we really need 6000 words on John Lennon, "musician, composer, and political activist"? Does Brian Jones, late of the Rolling Stones, deserve an entry in this august work? Does the American rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix? But enough. It is easy to carp. What the philosopher David Stove said about the DNB is true also of its successor: it is "a work which it would be merely impertinent to praise: it is simply the most valuable book of reference in existence."

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Butler's unhappy youth

by Anthony Daniels

A Russian friend of mine, who escaped the Soviet Union for America and who now lives in England, once told me that in his early years in the West he would always introduce himself at parties by saying, "Hello, I'm Alex, I hate my parents, don't you?"

Slightly taken aback, his interlocutors would consider for a split second and then say, "Well, as a matter of fact,"—or "Now you come to mention it,"—"I do." No one ever admitted to any other feelings about his parents than hatred or contempt: to have done so would have been to lose caste, at least in the intellectual circles in which he then moved. An unhappy childhood and tortured relations with one's progenitors were essential preconditions of a reputation for profundity. If a wise son maketh a glad father, a happy childhood maketh a shallow intellectual.

When, exactly, did filial piety cease to be (as it had been immemorially) a virtue, and become instead, if not a vice exactly, at least a character defect or a handicap in human life's constant race for self-importance? Like most social changes, it had no definite or definable beginning, but certainly one of the sacred texts of filial impiety was (and still is) Samuel Butler's autobiographical novel, *The Way of All Flesh*.

The spirit of this book, both marvellously liberating and dangerously destructive, has grown only stronger with the passage of the century since it was first published, and I have little doubt that its defiant spirit affected my growing-up. Until quite late in life, I felt I owed it to myself as an independent, autonomous person to cheek my teachers, albeit subtly, and raise sophistical objections to all their teachings. I thought myself very clever for doing so: but I have come to understand, alas too late to do anything about it, that had I had more of filial piety, in the widest sense, I should have been if not necessarily a better man, at least a better educated one. And I cannot now help recalling Mr. Venus's immortal expostulation, "Don't sauce ME in the wicious pride of your youth!"

Butler's book is a *Bildungsroman*, in which both the protagonist, Ernest Pontifex, and the narrator, Mr. Overton, are Butler. The literary device is a useful one, for it allows Butler to portray himself both as a young and as a mature man, the seed and the fruit. It also allows him to preach many lay sermons at the reader, for Butler's purpose was more didactic than artistic. He never entirely escaped his clerical origins: he became, in effect, a clergyman of rationalism.

The Way of All Flesh is perhaps the most devastating and relentless literary assault by a son upon a father ever written. The father, Thomas Butler in life and Theobald Pontifex in the book, stands accused (and of course convicted) of many odious sins. A vicar, he is a complete sententious humbug, utterly selfish, snobbish, mean, and avaricious, unfeeling about anyone except himself, a philistine who delights in cruelty to

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his own children in the name of supposedly necessary character-formation. He is an unctuous, sadistic, bullying hypocrite, all of whose learning is mere pedantry, and all of whose opinions are handed down to him by his ancestors and predecessors, which he was too lazy and self-interested ever to examine for their truth or otherwise. The slightest opposition or disagreement over anything is insupportable to him, and interpreted by him much as a general interprets a failure of soldiers to obey his orders.

Theobald's wife, Christina—modeled on Butler's mother—is a much weaker character, not without natural kindness, who nevertheless becomes cruel and hypocritical because of her subordination to her husband. Ernest's two siblings, his brother and sister, are odious sycophants of Theobald, pure toadies, though they hate him just as much as Ernest does. Ernest so comes to dislike his sister that he finds it physically nauseating even to give her a peck on the cheek when he meets her again after a long interval. Theobald's vile character poisons and embitters the atmosphere of the whole household and all who have ever lived in it.

The book is an account of Ernest's eventual escape from the malign influence of his father. Initially, he follows in his father's footsteps, first to Cambridge, then to ordination. He loses his faith, however, at his first encounter with rationalism; there is a happy ending when, after a series of disasters, including marriage to an alcoholic, he inherits a fortune left to him by an aunt, who is the only tolerant, decent member of his extended family.

The book, which Butler wrote between 1873 and 1885, was so obviously a *roman à clef* that he did not publish it in his lifetime. His father died in 1886, but his sister was still alive when he himself died in 1902. His refusal to publish until after his death was not to spare his relatives' feelings, however; his close friend and biographer, Henry Festing Jones, makes it quite clear in his voluminous memoir that Butler wanted the book published as soon as possible after his death (it was published in 1903, in fact), even if his sister were still alive. He wanted to spare not her feelings, therefore, but himself the embarrassment of having to face her feelings: thus he had not freed himself from his father's tuition as a selfish hypocrite quite as completely as he thought he had.

So powerful is the book that it is probable, when people speak of Victorian hypocrisy and the tyranny of the Victorian paterfamilias, from which liberation was so imperatively necessary, that they have Theobald Pontifex in mind—whether they know it or not. For within a few decades, he became the typical, the paradigm Victorian: humorless, moralizing, oppressive, and lacking all self-knowledge. It is hardly surprising that George Bernard Shaw regarded *The Way of All Flesh* not just as a good book, but as one of the supreme achievements of all humanity. This alone should be more than sufficient to put us on our guard.

In truth, it is very amusing, so amusing that one is apt to overlook its defects. Here, for example, is the scene in which the narrator, Mr. Overton, meets Ernest's headmaster at Roxborough School, Dr. Skinner, who is an an ordained clergyman. Mr. Overton plays a game of chess with him (Roxborough is Shrewsbury School, to which Butler was sent, and Dr. Skinner is Dr. Kennedy, who was later Bishop of Worcester), and when it is nearly over, his wife asks "in a silvery voice":

> "What will you take for supper, Dr. Skinner?"
>
> He made no answer for some time, but at last in a tone of almost superhuman solemnity, he said, first, "Nothing," and then, "Nothing whatever."
>
> By and by, however, I had a sense come over me as though I were nearer the consummation of all things than I had ever yet been. The room seemed to grow dark as an expression came over Dr. Skinner's face which showed that he was about to speak. The expression gathered force, the room grew darker and darker.
>
> "Stay," he at length added—and I felt that here at any rate was an end to a suspense

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> which was rapidly becoming unbearable—"Stay—I may presently take a glass of cold water—and a small piece of bread and butter."
>
> As he said the word "butter" his voice sank to a hardly audible whisper; then there was a sigh as though of relief when the sentence was concluded, and the universe this time was safe. Another ten minutes of solemn silence finished the game. The Doctor rose briskly from his seat and placed himself at the supper table.
>
> "Mrs. Skinner," he exclaimed jauntily, "what are those mysterious-looking objects surrounded by potatoes?"
>
> "Those are oysters, Dr. Skinner."
>
> "Give me some, and give Overton some."
>
> And so on until he had eaten a good plate of oysters, a scallop shell of minced veal nicely browned, some apple tart, and a hunk of bread and cheese. This was the small piece of bread and butter.

Dr. Skinner is like all the clergymen in the book, a pedantic hypocrite who is obliged by his false religious doctrine to speak portentously and to deny his own nature and appetites (another clergyman later swindles Ernest out of his first, small inheritance). Of this gallery of ecclesiastical poltroons, of course, Theobald Pontifex is by far the worst, but mainly because he is the protagonist's father and therefore the one most closely examined and satirized (in *The Way of All Flesh*, description is satirization). Theobald's utter self-centeredness and tetchy self-absorption appear in the amusing passage in which his attitude to his own children is delineated:

> Theobald had never liked children. He had always got away from them as soon as he could, and so had they from him; oh, why, he was inclined to ask himself, could not children be born into the world grown up? If Christina could have given birth to a few fullgrown clergymen in priest's orders—of moderate views, but inclining rather to Evangelicism, with comfortable livings and in all respects facsimiles of Theobald and Christina themselves—why there might have been more sense in it.

Was Butler's experience of the ecclesiastical milieu in which he grew up really as bad, as thoroughly wretched, as he portrays? There are reasons to doubt it. Was he exaggerating, in order to make further his subversion of Victorian society? There are reasons to think so.

First, Butler's letters to his mother contain nothing of the unadulterated misery that he describes in the book. Second, he once admitted that the conflict between him and his father was one of irreconcilable temperament, and that the fault was as much on his side as on his father's. Third, when Theobald dies in the book, he is mourned by everyone except his family, as a generous, decent, and selfless man of the cloth, in fact as a moral exemplar.

> "He never spoke an ill word against anyone," said the village doctor after his death. "He was not only liked, he was beloved by all who had anything to do with him."

While the phenomenon of a man behaving quite differently at home and in the world outside is far from unknown—captured in the expression "street angel, home devil," popular in the British slum in which I work—it is difficult to credit that Theobald could have been quite such a monster at home (for example, beating his children unmercifully if they mispronounced a word), without any murmur of it reaching the outside world and affecting his reputation. But for Butler, the fact that everyone loved his father was a condemnation of everyone, not of himself, and no reason to reexamine his attitudes. Fourth, Butler allows that Dr. Skinner, the headmaster of his school, was loved and admired, even revered, by the majority of his pupils, suggesting that Butler's intense dislike of him was once again the result of a clash of temperaments rather than of Dr. Skinner's horribly defective character. In other words, Butler is finding fault because he wants to, and the wish precedes the offense that allegedly gives rise to it.

According to Henry Festing Jones, Butler

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was in any case well aware that not all fathers were as Theobald Pontifex was, or allegedly was. In *The Way of All Flesh*, Butler was writing a satirical tract and not reportage. The very fictional name that he gives his father is satirical. He is vicar of Battersby, a name that conjures up violence; his wife, the daughter of another clergyman, came from the village of Crampsford, a name that suggests narrowmindedness and bigotry. Butler has many axes to grind.

Although *The Way of All Flesh* is a fictionalized (allegedly but slightly fictionalized) account of one man's relationship with his father, we are clearly intended to take it as being in some way typical or at least emblematic of a whole society and its way of life. It is, in fact, a parable, a literary form with which Butler's religious upbringing must have made him more than familiar, intended to get us to change our ways. This is proved by the frequent interjection of explicit lessons, or little sermons, in the book that Butler—both as Ernest Pontifex and as Mr. Overton, the narrator—preaches at us.

The book is, or at least could be, a manifesto for virtually all the social pathology that I have seen in my medical practice in a British slum at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Every intellectual presupposition that has gone to the creation of misery in the midst of plenty is not only contained, but trumpeted, in *The Way of All Flesh*.

"For most men," says Butler-Overton, "and most circumstances, pleasure—tangible material prosperity—is the safest test of virtue." I recall the puzzled parents of a delinquent adolescent, who consult me about the conduct of their offspring. They believe that they have done all that they could possibly have done for their child. I asked them what they mean by "all," to which they reply that they have given their child a television in his room—his very own television, all to himself!—and have always bought him the latest and most expensive designer clothes. Yes, they have been good parents, they have provided tangible material prosperity for their child, so how is it that he has turned out so bad, so ungrateful, destructive and dishonest, taking drugs and drinking to excess, greedy and demanding, aggressive when thwarted? For did not Butler-Overton write, "Pleasure, after all, is a safer guide [to conduct] than either 'right' or 'duty.' For hard as it is to know what gives us pleasure, 'right' and 'duty' are harder to distinguish still. . . ." The only sense that can be given to the word "duty" in fact is as follows:

> If a new edition of the work is ever required I should like to introduce a few words insisting on the duty of seeking all reasonable pleasure, and avoiding all pain that can be honourably avoided.

The destruction of the family as known to Butler would have pleased him no end. Butler-Overton asks near the beginning of the book, "Could any death be so horrible as birth? Or any decrepitude so awful as childhood in a happy united God-fearing family?" These are the words of a man so utterly certain of the stability of his society that he cannot imagine anything worse than that society.

Butler-Overton's questions are not the result of a sudden rush of blood to the head: they arise from his innermost conviction. Butler-Ernest believes the same thing:

> It seems to me [he preaches] that the family is a survival of the principle which is more logically embodied in the compound animal—and the compound animal is a form of life which has been found incompatible with high development. I would do with the family among mankind what nature has done with the compound animal, and confine it to the lower and less progressive races. Certainly there is no inherent love of the family system on the part of nature itself. Poll the forms of life and you will find it in a ridiculously small minority. The fishes know it not, and they get along quite nicely.

Forty million species can't be wrong, is

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Butler's argument here. It would take some effort to dissect all its shallowness in any detail, and is probably best grasped whole: close analysis would be to break a butterfly on the wheel.

As for fatherhood—which has been abolished in the area in which I live, with the most horrible consequences, both for the persons involved and for society as a whole—Butler-Ernest is against it, not only in the particular instance of Theobald Pontifex in particular, but in general:

> A man first quarrels with his father [he reflects] about three quarters of a year before he is born. It is then that he insists on setting up a separate establishment. When this has been once agreed to, the more complete the separation forever after the better for both.

Working as I do in an area in which Butler's advice has been followed almost to the letter, and fathers abandon their children at or before birth, I have observed that things do not always turn out well for the children, to put it very mildly. In this, Butler was a clever fool, rather like his great admirer, Shaw.

This was not his only foolishness. He believed in the superiority of youth, in child-centered learning and the doctrine of the Real Me, all of which have done so much to trivialize culture and turn adolescence into the permanent state of man, with dire social effects. Here, for example, is Butler-Overton on youth:

> I believe it lately has been maintained that it is the young and fair who are truly old and truly experienced inasmuch as it is they alone who have a living memory to guide them. . . . When we say that we are getting old, we should say rather that we are getting new or young, and are suffering from inexperience.

These sub-Wildean paradoxes may arrest our attention for a fraction of a second, but they are surely not true. They can appeal only to those who think that shocking the conventionally minded is the main purpose of intellection, and that an ounce of *bon mot* is worth a ton of truth: in short, those who are themselves of an adolescent cast of mind.

Child-centered learning and the doctrine of the Real Me are, of course, intimately connected: for the child is born with inherent wisdom, the Real Him, and is corrupted only by the myrmidons of formal education and social convention. The child is the best judge of what it should learn. According to Butler-Overton:

> It never occurred to him [Butler-Ernest] that the presumption was in favour of the rightness of what was most pleasant [to learn], and that the onus of proving that it was not right lay with those who disputed its being so.

Nevertheless, Butler-Ernest eventually got the message:

> Never learn anything [he said] until you find you have been made uncomfortable for a good long while by not knowing it . . .

The self, pure and uncontaminated by any training or education, is the fount of true wisdom—as Butler-Ernest continues:

> Obey ME, your true self, and things will go tolerably well with you, but only listen to that outward and visible husk of yours which is called your father, and I will rend you to pieces . . . for I, Ernest, am the God who made you.

And, as Aunt Alethea (Butler-Ernest's only kindly, un-Victorian relative) says on her deathbed, clearly with the approval of Butler-Overton: "nothing is well done nor worth doing unless, take it all round, it has come pretty easily."

The gate is no longer strait and the path narrow: virtue is easy, it is vice that has become difficult. The pursuit of happiness, which is to say pleasure, is not merely next to godliness; it IS godliness, according to Butler-Overton. When Ernest decides to break all contact with his parents, Butler-Overton says:

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> He was trying to give up father and mother for Christ's sake. He would have said he was giving them up because he thought they hindered him in his pursuit of his truest and most lasting happiness. Granted, but what is this if it is not Christ? What is Christ if it is not this? He who takes the highest and most self-respecting view of his own welfare which it is in his power to conceive . . . is a Christian whether he knows it and calls himself one, or whether he does not.

Could the cult of the self ever have been carried to greater lengths, at least intellectually? Here is the manifesto of the Me generation, decades before its actual appearance. Butler was the first satirist whose satires were prophecy.

Butler-Ernest is an early convert to the benefits of psychobabble. He says:

> If people would only dare to speak to one another unreservedly, there would be a great deal less sorrow in the world by the time a hundred years from now was over.

Suffice it to say that unreserved speech has never done much to resolve the petty quarrels in which I have sometimes been engaged, rather the contrary; and its contribution to the diminution of human sorrows in general is likewise to be doubted.

Butler's highly prescriptive opinions were a response to his personal experience, and based on a sample of one. There is no evidence in the book that he considered matters from a wider perspective, sociological, historical, economic, or cultural, in order to give his personal animosities that sense of proportion which comes with maturity (he was fifty when he finished the book). Butler-Ernest explains:

> "One great reason why clergymen's households are generally unhappy is because the clergyman is so much at home or close about the house. The doctor is out visiting patients half his time; the lawyer and the merchant have offices away from home, but the clergyman has no official place of business which shall ensure his being away from home for many hours together at stated times."

Butler-Ernest can thus conceive of a world in which it is possible to be only a clergyman, a doctor, a lawyer or a merchant: 5 percent of the British population of his time, at the very most. His satire (like that of so many satirists since him in the western world) is very much that of an upper-middle-class man, who does not deign to notice the 95 percent of the population seething beneath him.

He appeals to the clever adolescent, the naughty boy, in all of us, especially if we have—or believe we have, which is not quite the same thing, as history has amply attested—a safe and secure place in society. Butler's literary judgments, expressed in *The Way of All Flesh*, bear this out. Butler-Ernest had

> devoured Stanley's life of Arnold, Dickens's novels, and whatever other literary garbage of the day was most likely to do him harm.

As for Shakespeare, he goes to a burlesque of *Macbeth*, in which "Macbeth had said he could not kill Duncan when he saw his boots upon the landing" and "Lady Macbeth put a stop to her husband's hesitation by whipping him up under her arm and carrying him off the stage kicking and screaming." "What rot," [Ernest] exclaimed, "Shakespeare is after this." Butler-Overton heartily approves of Butler-Ernest's opinion.

Finally, there is Milton, who was paid only £5 for *Paradise Lost*: "'And a great deal too much money,' rejoined [Overton]. 'I would have given him twice as much myself not to have written it at all.'"

These are iconoclastic adolescent jibes, not considered judgments; and this applies to practically all the opinions Butler expresses in *The Way of All Flesh*. He hates his father so memorably, however, so irresistibly, bitterly, and funnily, that the average unwary reader thinks that so memorable a portrait must be allied to wise and pro-

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found thought. Butler's silly and shallow opinions go by default because of the dazzling literary artifact in which they appear. Whether the climate was ripe for Butler, or Butler created the climate, is a question that can never be answered definitively. But the *Way of All Flesh* is nevertheless an illustration of a law of propaganda—that the better it is, the worse it is.

Butler was an exemplar before his time of the tendency of modern intellectuals to take their personal experience, magnify it out of all proportion, generalize it, and use it to draw vast and often destructive conclusions about the whole of human existence. Is a hypocritical and domineering father really a good enough reason to destroy not just an individual family, but family structure as such, the family as a social phenomenon? The publication of *The Way of All Flesh* was an important moment in the rise of mass solipsism, and of the beatification of the victim as the only bearer of wisdom. In Samuel Butler, not measured truth, but a certain glittering, brittle cleverness, and earnestness without seriousness, has become the cynosure of literary endeavor.

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Jane Austen, anti-Jacobin

by Judy Stove

In a well-known essay first published in 1948 ("Manners, Morals, and The Novel"), Lionel Trilling wrote memorably of "the buzz of implication" which belongs to each time and each culture, and which it is very difficult for those of later times and other cultures to perceive. "The buzz of implication" means

> that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value. They are hinted at by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis, or rhythm, sometimes by the words that are used with a special frequency or a special meaning.

For in the works of an author as beloved, and as written about, as Jane Austen, one might expect that the "buzz of implication" had been thoroughly identified and analyzed. Yet this is not the case. For many modern writers, the implications of Austen's work are all about our own preoccupations ("gender" is, of course, chief among these), not those of the late eighteenth century. Yet Jane Austen herself possessed one of the most sensitive cultural ears of all time, and was mistress of the understatement. Her implications, therefore, contain much of her meaning.

What is astonishing is that her keen ear for the absurd and the obnoxious in society was developed so young. *Love and Friendship*, which Jane Austen wrote between the ages of eleven and fourteen, finishing it in 1790, is not only very funny. It is also a conservative polemic of considerable power. It does not take a Jane Austen to point out the absurdity of the sensibility cult of the second half of the eighteenth century: the excessive tears, fainting on sofas, etc. In *Love and Friendship*, Austen satirized this fashion, which she was later to treat in her more mature novels (particularly, of course, *Sense and Sensibility*), but she also attacked the radical selfishness which went along with the sensibility cult, from its very inception in the work of Rousseau and Goethe, and which was largely identified at the time with revolutionary politics.

This is often missed. The excellent 1997 biography by Claire Tomalin, for example, gets it 180 degrees wrong:

> [*Love and Friendship*] is black comedy, absurd and riotous, rejecting domestic virtue and decorum with élan and authority.

In fact, Jane Austen used the novel as a vehicle to ridicule the radical rejection of domestic virtue. Marilyn Butler perceived the book's thrust:

> Although Jane Austen's sentimentalists act in a way that is at the very least equivocal, for in practice they appear ruthlessly self-interested, it is no part of her intention to suggest that they are insincere. In her view the contradiction is inherent in the creed: she wants to show that the realization of self, an apparently

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> idealistic goal, is in fact necessarily destructive and delusory.

Yet Jane Austen wants very much to show that her "sentimentalists" are insincere—in fact, that hypocrisy is a basic feature of being sincerely radical. Her anti-heroines, Laura and Sophia, steal money from parents while despising them, declare their attachment to a young girl while pushing her into an elopement with a fortune-hunter, and profess great sympathy for Sophia's husband imprisoned in Newgate, but cannot actually bring themselves to visit him.

Pippa Brush's introduction to Juliet McMaster's authoritative 1995 edition of *Love and Freindship* (the original spelling of "Freindship" is often retained) claims that:

> *Love and Freindship* is a parody of a form with which Austen seems to have been intimately familiar—her ironies are so exact—and, while she might have been disapproving, seems to have enjoyed. Austen is laughing at her object, but that laughter is only affectionate.

In fact, she misses the political point entirely. With devastating treatment of the characters' contempt for their neighbors, family, and parents, Austen's laughter is no less savage for being expressed with restraint.

> I need not I imagine inform you that their union had been contrary to the inclinations of their cruel & mercenary parents; who had vainly endeavoured with obstinate perseverance to force them into a marriage with those whom they had ever abhorred; but with an heroic fortitude worthy to be related & admired, they had both constantly refused to submit to such despotic power.
>
> After having so nobly disentangled themselves from the shackles of parental authority, by a clandestine marriage, [Sophia and Augustus] were determined never to forfeit the good opinion they had gained in the world, in so doing, by accepting any proposals of reconciliation that might be offered them by their fathers—to this farther trial of their noble independence however they never were exposed.

Austen's satiric use of terms such as "despotic power" and "shackles of parental authority" must be significant. These were clichés of pretentious usage: dear old Dick Minim, Johnson's Critic in the *Idler*, rejoices that verse has at last shaken off the shackles of rhyming line-ends.

The last quote ("the good opinion they had gained in the world") denotes that defying parents was a path to popularity, and that Austen felt herself to be taking an unfashionable position.

The narrator of *Love and Friendship* is a woman called Laura, and the novel consists of her letters to her friend's daughter. Unlike most epistolary novels, *Love and Friendship* is entirely one-sided; there are no replies to Laura's letters, but—incorrigibly selfish—she does not notice. Laura relates the tale of her marriage to one Edward, and the couple's travels in company with their friends Augustus and Sophia. Both pairs of friends are convinced of their superiority to the less sophisticated people they meet. They move from one social prey to another, taking money and hospitality where they can, and repaying their victims with insults. The bourgeois system fights back at some points, such as when Augustus, having naturally failed to pay his bills ("they, exalted creatures! scorned to reflect a moment on their pecuniary distresses & would have blushed at the idea of paying their debts"), is confined in Newgate: "such unparalleled barbarity," exclaims Laura.

The most sinister scenes occur in Letters 12 and 13. Here Laura and Sophia (Augustus still being in Newgate, where Edward has gone to visit him) accept the invitation of Sophia's cousin, a Scottish gentleman called Macdonald. The friends set out to undermine Macdonald's influence over his teenage daughter Janetta, by persuading her not to marry the man of his choice, one Graham:

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> We soon saw through [Graham's] character—. He was just such a man as one might have expected to be the choice of Macdonald. They said he was sensible, well-informed, and agreeable; we did not pretend to judge of such trifles, but as we were convinced he had no soul, that he had never read the Sorrows of Werter, & that his hair bore not the least resemblance to auburn, we were certain that Janetta could feel no affection for him, or at least that she ought to feel none. The very circumstance of his being her father's choice, too, was so much in his disfavour, that had he been deserving her, in every other respect, yet that of itself ought to have been a sufficient reason in the eyes of Janetta for rejecting him.

Laura and Sophia persuade Janetta, instead, to elope to Gretna Green with one Captain M'Kenzie. Next:

> Sophia happening one day to open a private drawer in Macdonald's library with one of her own keys, discovered that it was the place where he kept his papers of consequence & amongst them some bank-notes of considerable amount. This discovery she imparted to me; and having agreed together that it would be a proper treatment of so vile a wretch as Macdonald to deprive him of money, perhaps dishonestly gained, it was determined that the next time we should either of us happen to go that way, we would take one or more of the bank notes from the drawer. This well-meant plan we had often successfully put in execution; but alas! On the very day of Janetta's escape, as Sophia was majestically removing the 5th bank-note from the drawer to her own purse, she was suddenly most impertinently interrupted in her employment by the entrance of Macdonald himself, in a most abrupt & precipitate manner.

The women have targeted Macdonald because he is a rich gentleman, without pretensions to being an intellectual (his preferred son-in-law had not read Goethe), and because he is a parent. They are simply taking direct action towards the reappropriation of his wealth. When thus caught red-handed, Sophia's tactics, in barefaced denial of guilt and turning the accusation back on the enemy, are truly revolutionary:

> Wretch (exclaimed she, hastily replacing the bank-note in the drawer) how darest thou to accuse me of an act, of which the bare idea makes me blush?

Macdonald has the last word: having told them to leave his house, he notes that their having betrayed his daughter to a fortune-hunter "must indeed be a most grateful reflection, to your exalted minds." In using the term "exalted," commonly used to denote superior intellect and feeling, Jane Austen makes clear that her satire is at the expense of self-appointed intellectuals who think themselves above the law.

Edward and Augustus reappear, only to die in a carriage accident, and their widows proceed to seek shelter in a cottage:

> [The owner] was a widow & had only one daughter, who was then just seventeen—One of the best of ages; but alas! She was very plain & her name was Bridget . . . Nothing therefore could be expected from her . . . she could not be supposed to possess either exalted ideas, delicate feelings or refined sensibilities—She was nothing more than a mere good-tempered, civil & obliging young woman; as such we could scarcely dislike her—she was only an object of contempt.

Who can have inspired these characters? One common kind of criticism would suggest that there was no real-life model, only literary ones. This seems unlikely: from Scott and Macaulay onwards, readers have delighted in the extent to which Jane Austen's mature work reflects keen observation of actual people. In fact, the behavior and attitudes of Laura and Sophia bear a startling resemblance to those of a real person: the most influential writer of the century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

A seemingly distant incident is in fact relevant to *Love and Friendship*. As Rousseau

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was on his way to visit Diderot in prison at Vincennes in 1749, he saw an advertisement of an essay competition offered by the Academy of Dijon on the subject: "Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to corrupt[ing] or to purify[ing] morals?" Overcome by his ideas on the theme, Rousseau sank down under a tree beside the road (it was a hot day), and on rising noticed that his waistcoat was wet with tears.

> Ah, if ever I could have written a quarter of what I saw and felt under that tree, with what clarity I should have brought out all the contradictions of our social system! With what simplicity I should have demonstrated that man is by nature good, and that only our institutions have made him bad!

Not only, as shrewd observers have pointed out, were "those tears that streaked his vest . . . the headwaters of the Romantic Movement in France and Germany," but those sentiments were the fount of revolutionary politics for the two hundred years to come. Note even the use of the term "contradictions," that stock proto-Marxist term. We can still see reflections of that distant sunny moment in 1749, from the arguments used on behalf of defendants in court, to the protests which call for the destruction of global trade.

Jane Austen's contemporaries were in no doubt about the extent to which Rousseau's life and works influenced literature, society, and politics. Godwin and Mrs. Inchbald both planned to translate Rousseau's *Confessions* into English. A Gillray cartoon from 1798, drawn for the *Anti-Jacobin* magazine, shows English radicals bowing before three deities: Justice, Philanthropy (trampling underfoot "Ties of Nature" and "Amor Patriae"), and Sensibility, this last in the form of a dismal female revolutionary figure, clutching a book inscribed "Rousseau." In Hazlitt's view, Rousseau, convinced

> that external situation and advantages are but the mask, and that the mind is the man—armed with which [belief], impenetrable, incorrigible, . . . went forth, conquering and to conquer, and overthrew the monarchy of France and the hierarchies of the earth. Till then, birth and wealth and power were all in all. . . . Rousseau was the first who held the torch (lighted at the never-dying fire in his own bosom) to the hidden chambers of the mind of man.

(One recalls Saintsbury's fine remark that "The clear sunshine of Hazlitt's admirably acute intellect is always there; but it is constantly obscured by driving clouds of furious prejudice.") Rousseau's essay (the "Discours sur les arts and les sciences") won the Dijon competition, and his literary career was well begun. His novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) was read everywhere, and had enormous influence, particularly over women. The young Manon Phlipon, later Madame Roland, wrote to her friend Sophie Cannet:

> I am astonished that you wonder at my love for Rousseau. I regard him as the friend of humanity, as its benefactor and mine. . . . His *Héloïse* is a masterpiece of sentiment. The woman who can read it without being better or at least without desiring to become so, has only a soul of clay, a mind of apathy.

Its relevance to us is the fact that if the young Jane Austen read any of Rousseau's works, it was probably this. An English translation had appeared in April 1761, only two months after the French original. (It is unlikely that she had read the *Confessions*, which were issued in several volumes during the 1780s.) We have seen that she makes the other classic sentimental novel of the time, Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), Laura and Sophia's criterion of worth. *Julie*, as the most important novel of the mid-century, must have been known to Jane Austen at least by report. Although none of her letters survive from earlier than 1796, we know from later ones that she liked to dislike books that were popular, or were recommended to her. The very

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popularity of *Julie* and *Werther*, combined with their moral and political tendencies, is likely to have inspired Jane Austen's annoyance.

The politics of *Julie* are intimately connected with the character of Saint-Preux, the Rousseau-figure, who falls in love with his pupil Julie d'Étange. Saint-Preux is not thought a worthy son-in-law by Baron d'Étange; therefore, gentlemen and fathers are themselves unworthy, and existing institutions are to be despised. Thus, this issue—whether parents had the right to choose a partner for their children—was of the first social and, in fact, political importance. It is clear that Rousseau's politics—just like the views of Saint-Preux—were grounded in a sense that society had somehow failed to acknowledge his superiority. (Significantly, this was also a factor in the developing revolutionary consciousness of Manon Phlipon, as she saw women of higher rank but less education than herself treated with more respect. She, also, resented her father's interference in her marriage plans.)

Lord Bomston, an English lord who becomes infatuated with both Julie and Saint-Preux, declares his democratic principles in support of the latter. Importantly for *Love and Friendship*, Lord Bomston also makes clear the arrogance of those whose sensibility entitles them, in their own view, to special treatment: "Your two souls [those of Julie and Saint-Preux] are so extraordinary that they cannot be judged by common rules." Lord Bomston becomes Saint-Preux's benefactor, much in the way that various aristocrats patronized Rousseau. Saint-Preux, like his creator, takes all favors simply as his due:

> With a heart full of our obligations to him, I tried to show him my feelings and yours, but I had a kind of shame about them. In truth, it is to insult a man like him to thank him for anything.

This sounds like a Jane Austen parody of selfishness, but it appears to be serious. That Rousseau's egotism had political consequences was recognized even by his keenest fans, such as Hazlitt:

> It was the excess of his egotism and his utter blindness to everything else that found a sympathy in the conscious feelings of every human breast, and shattered to pieces the pride of rank and circumstance by the pride of internal worth or upstart pretension.

In other words, Rousseau's egotism was tactical.

Avowed selfishness allowed him to treat with disdain those higher in the social order, and the tactic undoubtedly worked. Like Jane Austen's Laura and Sophia, Rousseau was showered with favors by aristocrats and bourgeois, with whom he almost invariably quarreled, or whom he went on to insult. The following is by no means a complete list:

- The home donated to Rousseau, his de facto wife Thérèse Levasseur, and her mother, by Madame d'Épinay, between 1756 and the end of 1757, by which time they had quarreled bitterly;
- A pension to help support Thérèse and her mother, organized secretly by Grimm, Diderot, and d'Holbach in the mid-1750s; Rousseau was furious at this "humiliation" when he discovered it;
- A life annuity of 300 livres from Marc-Michel Rey, Rousseau's Amsterdam publisher, on behalf of Thérèse;
- A cottage leased to him and Thérèse in 1757 (following his quarrel with Madame d'Épinay) by an agent of Louis-François de Bourbon, Prince de Conti;
- Invitations from the Maréchal and Maréchale de Luxembourg to stay with them while the cottage was repaired, resulting in Rousseau and Thérèse moving into the "Petit Château" on their estate in May 1759. This hospitality Rousseau requited very much in the manner

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> of Augustus and Sophia, who, as we saw, notified their new neighbors that they wished for no company but their own. Rousseau, in a letter of 1762, wrote that "I hate the great, I hate their position, their harshness, their prejudices, . . . their vices. . . . It was in such a frame of mind I went as one dragged along to the chateau [of the Luxembourgs] at Montmorency";

- A home and money donated by the Prussian King Frederick the Great, on the occasion of Rousseau's exile from Switzerland following the publication of *Émile* in 1762; and

- A home in England, contacts, and a pension of £100 a year from King George III, organized in 1765–1766 by Hume, which resulted in the most famous quarrel of all.

Not only can Rousseau's habit of using and discarding benefactors be considered a template for the behavior of Jane Austen's Laura and Sophia, but so can his contempt for those he considered inferior. The disdain expressed by Laura for the unpretentious Bridget is no more frank than that of Rousseau in his *Confessions* for his de facto wife of many years, Thérèse:

> I at first tried to improve her mind, but in this my pains were useless. Her mind is as nature formed it; it was not susceptible of cultivation. . . . I formerly made a dictionary of her phrases to amuse M. de Luxembourg, and her *qui pro quos* often became celebrated among those with whom I was most intimate.

By the time Rousseau immortalized his obsession with Sophie d'Houdetot in *Julie*, Thérèse had borne him five children, all of whom were sent—against her will—to a foundling asylum. As Rousseau himself put it:

> This arrangement seemed to me to be so good, reasonable and lawful, that if I did not publicly boast of it, the motive by which I was withheld was merely my regard for their mother. . . . Everything considered, I chose the best destination for my children, or that which I thought to be such. I could have wished, and still should be glad, had I been brought up as they have been.

It is believed that all five children died young. Rousseau's best-selling manual on child-rearing, *Émile*, appeared in 1762: the hypocrisy of Jane Austen's "sentimentalists" pales in comparison with that of their spiritual father.

The parent-child relationship, and its subversion, is the chief concern of *Love and Friendship*. Apart from those references already cited, the novella contains at least half a dozen others to Laura's dislike of the influence of parents. As we saw in connection with *Julie*, parental power was a crucial issue in the eighteenth-century novel. Here, again, we can safely leave aside those views which suggest that Jane Austen dealt only in literary tropes, and not with real-life problems. Scott, in discussing Richardson's *Clarissa*, noted that the degree to which that book reflected real life was a matter for debate. He concluded that most readers thought Richardson had exaggerated his depiction of the cruelty and neglect practiced by parents and relatives, although he noted that family mores had certainly been different in Richardson's time. Scott may have considered Johnson's *Rambler* essay "On the Tyranny of Parents" an accurate depiction of mid-century practice (no doubt Jane Austen also knew this essay):

> Capricious injunctions, partial decisions, unequal allotments, distributions of reward not by merit but by fancy, and punishments regulated not by the degree of the offence, but by the humour of the judge, are too frequent where no power is known but that of a father.

Well, yes; but this is no more than to say that a household is not an ideal commonwealth, which should have surprised no-one. We may turn to domestic comedy for a more realistic view. While still a very young man, Sheridan created a brilliant portrait of

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a father-son relationship. The Absolutes, father and son, in *The Rivals*, exhibit what was no doubt authentic mutual impatience, combined with affection and respect, and a recognition of their family likeness. (That Jane Austen had the theater, and probably Sheridan, in mind when writing *Love and Friendship*, we know from her reference to the actors Lewis and Quick.)

In emphasizing the radical opposition to the reasonable authority exerted by parents, particularly in the choice of a partner for their child, Jane Austen is adding her voice to that of Burke. His speech on a bill, brought forward by Fox in June 1781, proposing to repeal the Marriage Act, of which the key principle was that the power of marrying without the consent of parents should not take place till twenty-one years of age, helps us to understand the significance of the episode of Janetta Macdonald and the fortune-hunting M'Kenzie. Burke emphasizes that debate on parental power was political:

> It is said the marriage act is aristocratic. I am accused, I am told abroad, of being a man of aristocratic principles. If by aristocracy they mean the peers, I have no vulgar admiration, nor any vulgar antipathy, towards them; I hold their order in cold and decent respect.
>
> You are afraid of the avaricious principle of fathers. But observe, that the avaricious principle is here mitigated very considerably. It is avarice by proxy; it is avarice, not working by itself, or for itself, but through the medium of parental affection, meaning to procure good for its offspring. . . . While you would guard against the possible operation of this species of benevolent avarice, the avarice of the father, you let loose another species of avarice; that of the fortune-hunter, unmitigated, unqualified. To show the motives, who has heard of a man running away with a woman not worth sixpence? Do not call this by the name of the sweet and best passion—love. It is robbery; not a jot better than any other.

It is Burke's cautious and paternalistic approach which Jane Austen's anti-heroes emphatically reject, and which she invites us, by implication, to support.

Naturally enough, if, as radical writers believed, the laws promoting parental authority were "aristocratic," in their ideal state there would be no need of them. Though it was written after *Love and Friendship*, it is worth glancing at Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792). This novel's hero, Frank Henley, whose father is portrayed as a scheming wretch, and his Anna, whose father is merely silly, discuss the joy which will result from a perfectly educated mankind, where marriage is no more, and children are "children of the state."

Holcroft, the older friend of Godwin and Hazlitt, had a belief in the perfectibility of humans so literal that he doubted the inevitability of death. He wrote to his father in 1791: "This is I am persuaded is the error of a false supposition, that death is inevitable. Not that I would have you understand I myself think I shall not die: but I very sincerely think, when I do die, it will be of ignorance, and of the disease [inactivity] I have just mentioned; accidents excepted."

Reality had little effect on Holcroft's views. In 1789, his sixteen-year-old only son, William, like Jane Austen's Augustus, broke open his father's drawer and stole forty pounds and a pair of pistols. With a friend, he boarded ship for the West Indies. Holcroft pursued his son to Deal, and boarded the vessel. As he, the ship's steward, and some of the sailors were approaching, William shot himself.

Holcroft had lavished care and love on his only son ("Mr Holcroft thought no pains should be spared for his instruction and improvement"), had done, in fact, all that "education" could do. Yet even after his tragic suicide, the father continued to believe that the re-education of all mankind was both possible and desirable. This is not merely pathetic, it is ominous. One modern writer says, "Indeed it is a lovely vision Holcroft presents in *Anna St. Ives*," but it need hardly be said that from large-scale "education to correct a mass of error" it is

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only a short step to the re-education camp. How did Jane Austen, at such a young age, perceive so clearly that radical sentimentalists were not merely ridiculous, but actively dangerous?

The answer must, in part, lie with Jane Austen's older cousin, Eliza, Comtesse de Feuillide, to whom *Love and Friendship* is dedicated. Eliza was charming, perceptive, and fashionable. Importantly—and this is often overlooked—Eliza was also an exemplar of filial, maternal, and family affection, both a devoted daughter to her mother, Jane's aunt Mrs. Hancock, and a loving mother to her disabled son. Eliza and her mother formed a resolute twosome in their rootless existence, between India, England, and France. It is likely that during her years in France during the 1780s, Eliza noted the growing spirit of the age—the influence of Rousseau, and his sometime allies the *philosophes*, affecting all social and family life—and expressed to her younger cousin her dismay. As we have seen, it was unlikely that Jane had read the *Confessions*, but it is possible that Eliza had; and both would have known of the book.

Eliza was also devoted to her godfather (possibly her actual father), Warren Hastings, and attended many sessions of his protracted legal proceedings. (It is instructive to note that while Sheridan and Burke stood for sane and stable family institutions, they were dedicated to the prosecution of genuine despotism, such as, they believed—rightly or not—had been practiced by Hastings in India.)

Examples of radical hypocrisy were not wanting even in Jane and Eliza's immediate circle. A "Cousin Hampson" whom Eliza mentions often in her letters was actually a baronet, but, according to Eliza's recent biographer, his republican principles led him to avoid using his title. They did not prevent him from ostentatious display of his wealth, as Eliza wrote to yet another cousin, Philadelphia Walter, in 1791:

> Did I tell you when I saw you in town how very noble a house our Cousin Hampson has got, he has left Wimpole Street and is now in Cumberland Place, where he has purchased a really magnificent mansion.
>
> Cumberland Place is built in the form of a crescent and is not yet half finished. The houses are extremely noble, and I know that one about two doors from our cousin's lets for fifteen guineas a week.

Cousin Hampson's fellow republicans across the Channel saw to it that, three years later, Eliza's husband, the Comte de Feuillide, had his property seized by the French government. The Comte was arrested in Paris and guillotined, together with an elderly friend he had tried to protect by offering a bribe to government agents. In London, during the same year, 1794, Thomas Holcroft was arrested for participating in a radical group, spent eight weeks in Newgate, and then was acquitted and released (the ubiquitous Sheridan had testified in favor of the chief defendant, Horne Tooke). Such were the "coercive measures" of the counter-revolution in England.

Meanwhile, Jane Austen wrote an openly—indeed, joyously—Tory *History of England* (1791), and began early drafts of her later novels. Fundamental to her mature works remained a conservative sense of the respect owed to the old, even where—as in the case of Mrs. Bennet or Mr. Woodhouse—it is difficult to pay it. Where the young breach this code—as in Emma's humiliation of Miss Bates—we find the scene as affecting as Priam's self-abasement before Achilles, or the rejection of Falstaff by the new-minted King Henry the Fifth. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* are not, overtly, political novels. Their forebear *Love and Friendship*, however, as we can appreciate through reading it with close attention, is a political companion piece to its author's *History*, and to the comment she wrote in the margin of Goldsmith's *History*: "Nobly said! Spoken like a Tory!" Jane Austen, whether we like it or not, was an early anti-Jacobin.

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Morisot & Manet

by Jeffrey Meyers

Berthe Morisot's letters to her sister Edma and Edouard Manet's many portraits of Berthe strongly suggest that they were lovers. Manet admired Morisot's work, relished her talk, and fell in love with her. Often alone together in his studio, they had ample time for intimacy. They burned each other's letters when she married, both because they had something to hide and as a sign that their intimate relationship had come to an end. Though Manet did not paint Morisot after her marriage in 1874, their close friendship continued. He sent her an easel in the latest style as a New Year's gift and urged her to try more rapidly executed and spontaneous pastel drawings. He also encouraged her to visit Venice which, he felt, would inspire her as it had once inspired him. She remained devoted to Manet during his lifetime and did everything she could to enhance his reputation after his death. Manet's erotic portraits reveal not only the talent of the painter and beauty of the model, but also their intimate bond.

In July 1868, Berthe Morisot and her sister Edma were copying a Rubens nude in the Louvre, that great social arena of Parisian life, when they were introduced by Henri Fantin-Latour to Manet, eight years older than Berthe and married. The Manet and Morisot families became friends, and Berthe and Edouard grew increasingly intimate. Berthe's wonderfully animated correspondence, over a period of fifteen years, traces the progress of their intellectual and emotional friendship. They moved from physical attraction and flirtation, to sexual jealousy and wounding criticism, to adoration and love.

A month after their first encounter, Manet expressed his admiration for the sisters. He jokingly told Fantin-Latour that they could help rebellious painters by using their feminine wiles to undermine the ancient members of the Academy: "I agree with you, the young Morisot girls are charming, it's a pity they're not men; but being women, they could still do something in the cause of painting by each marrying an academician and bringing discord into the camp of those old dodderers, though that would be asking for considerable self-sacrifice." Like her teacher Joseph-Benoit Guichard, he assumed that for a woman, art could be only a decorative pastime. Manet also saw, beneath the playful banter, that he and Berthe were both high-strung and vulnerable, nervous and moody, critical yet full of self-doubt and craving recognition. They also shared an edgy rivalry with other painters. When Morisot was invited to the studio of Puvis de Chavannes, a faintly ludicrous figure and creator of enormously successful neo-classical murals, Manet wickedly told her to deflate his pretensions: "Don't be constrained. Tell him all the worst things that you can think of about his painting!"

The Morisots took particular interest in Manet's *Balcony*, which Berthe had posed

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for and which he exhibited in the Salon of 1869. Mme. Morisot said that Manet, overwrought while waiting for the critical response, "looks like a madman." He hoped for success, but was depressed by fear of failure. When Berthe came to the opening, she discovered Manet in a kind of manic-depressive state and tried to reassure him about the picture: "There I found Manet, with his hat on in bright sunlight, looking dazed. He begged me to go and see his painting, as he did not dare to move a step. I have never seen such an expressive face as his; he was laughing, then had a worried look, assuring everybody that his picture was very bad, and adding in the same breath that it would be a great success. I think he has a decidedly charming temperament, I like it very much."

When Eva Gonzalès (eight years younger than Morisot) became Manet's pupil, she became a formidable rival for Berthe. Manet painted a portrait of her at her easel, and she achieved some success in the Salons. To arouse Berthe's jealousy, Manet praised Eva's personal and artistic qualities. Mme. Morisot rubbed salt in the wound by telling Berthe that "he has forgotten about you for the time being. Mademoiselle G. has all the virtues, all the charms, she is an accomplished woman." Greatly discouraged by his criticism, Berthe complained to her sister that Eva was being admired at her expense: "Manet lectures me, and holds up that eternal Mademoiselle Gonzalès as an example; she has poise, perseverance, she is able to carry an undertaking to a successful issue, whereas I am not capable of anything." Manet felt that Morisot was too respectable and restrained, and admired Gonzalès for actively competing in the art world. His feelings for Eva were strong. While he was serving in the National Guard during the Franco-Prussian War, he told her: "my admiration and friendship for you are common knowledge. . . . Of all the privations the siege is inflicting on us, that of not seeing you any more is certainly one of the hardest to bear."

If Manet was in a good mood, he could be very encouraging. Morisot delightedly told Edma: "We spent Thursday evening at Manet's. He was bubbling over with good spirits, spinning a hundred nonsensical yarns, one funnier than another. . . . The Manets came to see us Tuesday evening, and we all went into the studio. To my great surprise and satisfaction, I received the highest praise; it seems that what I do is decidedly better than Eva Gonzalès. Manet is too candid, and there can be no mistake about it. I am sure that he liked these things a great deal."

But if his mood changed, his despair could be infectious and draw Morisot, who greatly valued his opinion, into the depths of his gloom: "[Manet] says that the success of my exhibition is assured and that I do not need to worry; the next instant he adds that I shall be rejected [by the jury]. I wish I were not concerned with all this."

On one occasion, Manet carried his dominance too far. When Berthe completed *Reading* in March 1870, she asked Manet's opinion of it. Instead of telling her what had to be done, he began to retouch it, got quite carried away, and tried to make her work his own. Manet

> found it very good, except for the lower part of the [mother's black] dress. He took the brushes and put in a few accents that looked very well; mother was in ecstasies. That is where my misfortunes began. Once started, nothing could stop him; from the skirt he went to the bust, from the bust to the head, from the head to the background. He cracked a thousand jokes, laughed like a madman, handed me the palette, took it back; finally by five o'clock in the afternoon, we had made the prettiest caricature that was ever seen. The carter was waiting to take it away; he made me put it on the hand-cart, willy-nilly. And now I am left confounded. My only hope is that I shall be rejected. My mother thinks this episode funny, but I find it agonizing.

Manet's brushstrokes are still visible around the eye and mouth and on the dress

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of Mme. Morisot, who was pleased by his improvements. Berthe once again called him a madman and resented the imposition of his style, however well intentioned, on her own. Though terribly upset, she felt unable to protest, and when Manet insisted, simply handed the painting over to the carter. She said she hoped it would be rejected, but the Salon jury accepted it, and she later showed it in the first Impressionist exhibition. By taking possession of the painting, Manet seemed to have violated her, and her anguished response revealed the depth of her feeling for him. Mme. Morisot, concerned about Berthe's physical reaction, told Edma: "Yesterday she looked like a person about to faint; she grieves and worries me; her despair and discontent were so great that they could be ascribed only to a morbid condition; moreover she tells me every minute that she is going to fall ill. . . . You know how the smallest thing here takes on the proportions of a tragedy because of our nervous and febrile dispositions."

Yet Berthe's friendship with Manet deepened during the siege of Paris, when the Morisots, rejecting his advice, decided to remain in the capital. All three Manet brothers served in the National Guard. To scare the Morisots into leaving, Manet gave Berthe's mother hair-raising reports of the war. Just after the war broke out, she exclaimed: "The tales that the Manet brothers have told us about all the horrors that we are liable to experience are almost enough to discourage the most stout-hearted. You know how they always exaggerate, and at present they see everything in the blackest possible light. . . . The Manets told Berthe: 'You will be in a fine way when you are wounded in the legs or disfigured!'" Berthe retaliated by telling Edma, rather unfairly, that Manet was a vain chocolate soldier who spent most of his time changing his uniform and admiring himself.

The privations Morisot suffered and her first-hand experience of war set her nerves on edge. In late September 1870, a few weeks after war broke out, she wrote Edma:

> I have heard so much about the perils ahead that I have had nightmares for several nights, in which I lived through all the horrors of war. . . . The militia are quartered in the studio, hence there is no way of using it. I do not read the newspapers much any more; one a day is enough for me. The Prussian atrocities upset me, and I want to retain my composure. . . . Would you believe that I am being accustomed to the sound of the cannon? It seems to me that I am now absolutely inured to war and capable of enduring anything.

Manet and the Morisots were on opposite sides during the Paris Commune. During the Commune, the ceilings by Ingres and Delacroix in the town hall were destroyed by fire, and the Audit Office, where Berthe's father worked, was also burned. On June 5, 1871, after Berthe's brother Tiburce, a lieutenant in the Versailles army, had been released and the Commune had been brutally suppressed, Mme. Morisot, using a favorite word to describe Manet, emphasized the danger of supporting the rebels: "Tiburce has met two Communards, at this moment when they are all being shot. . . . Manet and Degas! Even at this stage they are condemning the drastic measures used to repress them. I think they are insane."

Their conflicting political views did not cause a breach, and the following month Manet pleased Mme. Morisot by taking a friendly interest in Tiburce. The old boulevardier also urged Berthe, who'd been visiting Edma, to hurry back to the capital. He was eager to see her: "I hope, Mademoiselle, that you will not stay a long time in Cherbourg. Everybody is returning to Paris; besides, it's impossible to live anywhere else." When Berthe returned and visited the Manets with her mother a month later, the sharp-tongued Mme. Morisot wrote critically of their hot and crowded home. The conditions were mitigated, however, by the spirited piano-playing of Manet's Dutch wife Suzanne, the mournful singing of the Spaniard Lorenzo Pagans, and the welcome appearance of the slow-

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moving, heavy-lidded Degas: "I found the Manet salon in just the same state as before; it is nauseating. . . . The heat was stifling, everybody was cooped up in the one drawing room, the drinks were warm. But Pagans sang, Madame Edouard played, and Monsieur Degas was there. That is not to say he flitted about; he looked very sleepy."

Berthe's relationship with Manet intensified at the end of 1871. Their nervous breakdowns seemed to reinforce their bond, and as they recovered they drew closer. Manet began to praise her work, and now said that she *could* persevere and would surely achieve success if she tried really hard. Berthe, who craved his admiration more than anything in the world, joyfully told Edma that he had admired her appearance and asked her to sit for more portraits: "[Manet] was very nice to me. Once more he thinks me not too unattractive, and wants to take me back as his model. Out of sheer boredom, I shall end by proposing this very thing myself."

Proud of her slim yet shapely figure, Berthe was as jealous of Suzanne as she was of Eva and could be as caustic as her mother. Noticing that the hefty Suzanne had gained even more weight during her wartime rustication in the Pyrenees, Mme. Morisot told the receptive Berthe: "[Manet's] wife is somewhat recovered, but he must have experienced a great shock at the sight of this bucolic blooming." She also remarked that Manet, painting an idealized portrait of his wife, was "laboring to make of that monster something slender and interesting!" Toward the end of the year, Berthe took up this refrain and continued to mock the unfortunate Suzanne: "I saw our friend Manet yesterday; he left today with his fat Suzanne for Holland, and in such a bad humour that I do not know how they will get there."

Their malicious and sometimes snobbish delight extended from Suzanne to other beefy women in their family and social circle. Mme. Morisot was pleased to report that Manet, implying that he no longer found his own wife attractive, had said that "in a few years Tiburce will be ashamed of his wife—he admits that she has a pretty face, but he cannot endure her figure." Berthe, still gnawing at this obsessive theme two decades later, commented on the considerable bulk of Renoir's wife and told their friend, the poet Stéphane Mallarmé: "I shall never succeed in describing to you my astonishment at the sight of that ungainly woman."

Manet was the dominant artist, and Morisot imitated several of his compositions and themes. Manet's more crowded, complex, and thematically significant *View of the Paris World's Fair* (1867) clearly influenced Morisot's more simplified and expansive *Paris Seen from the Trocadéro* (1872–1873), in which the same golden dome and twin church spires appear in the distance. In 1875 they both painted a picture with a similar domestic theme. Manet's *Washing* had a close-up of a mother and child hanging up laundry on a clothesline in a garden, while Morisot, more interestingly, in *Laundress Hanging Out the Wash*, took a bird's-eye view of several women in an open field. In the background and under a cloudy sky, a house, a bridge, and factories encroach on the rural landscape. She paid tribute to Manet by putting his *Portrait of Isabelle Lemonnier* (1880) in the background of her *Violin Practice* (1893), and by placing his portrait *Berthe Morisot Reclining* (1873) in the background of *Julie Playing the Violin* (1894). Manet was so pleased with *The Harbor at Lorient* (1869) that Morisot gave it to him as a present.

Yet Morisot could sometimes influence her master. In Morisot's *On the Balcony* (1871–1872), as in Manet's *Railway* (1872–1873), the mother faces the viewer while the child, blocked by a fence, looks away. Morisot had painted women dressed appropriately for the season in *Summer* (1878) and *Winter* (1879–1880); Manet completed the suite with *Autumn* (1881) and *Spring* (1882). And she clearly influenced his technique. "Had it not been for Berthe Morisot," Georges Bataille pointed out, "in whom he discovered the

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double enchantment of a painter's talents and a model's beauty, he might never have tried his hand at Impressionist painting."

Between 1868 and 1874, when Morisot was in her late twenties and early thirties, Manet painted a series of eleven portraits of her, with variants in watercolor, lithograph, and etching. Manet treasured these pictures, several of which are among his greatest works. He kept five of them and gave her two, and she bought a third one after his death. Though he painted Eva Gonzalès as an artist, his portraits of Morisot emphasized her personality rather than her profession. His portraits, sensitive to every nuance of mood and change of expression, are more enigmatic, emotionally charged, and sensual than his nude paintings of his favorite model, Victorine Meurent.

Morisot's tragic appearance, restrained energy, and luminous intensity suggest powerful psychological undertones, as well as the sexual tensions and inhibitions of a handsome married man and a beautiful unmarried woman. Manet portrayed her differently from portrait to portrait. She could appear pensive or melancholy, stricken by illness or grief, seductive behind a veil or fan, or sensually swathed in heavy furs. But her skin was always luminously white against her black clothing. As John Richardson observed, "this intelligent and striking-looking girl appealed to him because she was an obliging model with dramatic, rather Spanish features and a habit of dressing in his favorite combination of black and white—as witness some of Manet's most hallucinating portraits." The portraits also reveal the impossibility of their love, and suggest an answer to Yeats's famous rhetorical question: "Does the imagination dwell the most/ Upon a woman won or a woman lost?"

The Balcony (1868–1869), unfolding between two green shutters and a green railing, dramatically introduces Morisot on Manet's artistic stage. As so often in Manet's work, the three figures—the painter Antoine Guillemet, the concert violinist Fanny Claus, and Morisot—are isolated, detached from each other. The bareheaded Berthe, with wild curls on her forehead and black hair flowing down her shoulders, has tense fingers, large dark eyes, sinuous lips and an anxious, troubled expression, as if she's seen something frightening that the others haven't noticed. Manet's depiction of Berthe may have been inspired by the theme of lost love in Baudelaire's "Balcony":

> Can vows and perfume, kisses infinite,
> Be reborn from the gulf we cannot sound;
> As rise to heaven suns once again made bright
> After being plunged in deep seas and profound?
> Ah, vows and perfumes, kisses infinite!

Berthe Morisot with a Muff (1868–1869), like his late portraits of Méry Laurent, portrays her luxuriously wrapped in dark fur, with her hands plunged into a large fur muff. Her tall ribboned hat and flowing coat, in a strong pyramidal form, suggest her forceful character. The year after Manet completed the picture, Leopold Sacher-Masoch stressed the sexual, even perverse significance of fur in his novel, *Venus in Furs*. Franz Kafka developed this idea more movingly in "The Metamorphosis" (1915), when Gregor Samsa, having been transformed into a gigantic bug, "was struck by the picture of the lady muffled in so much fur and quickly crawled up to it and pressed himself to the glass, which was a good surface to hold on to and comforted his hot belly." Manet's riveting image made Morisot notorious among the artists and aroused their curiosity about her relations with Manet. When she saw her portrait in the 1869 Salon, she remarked: "I am more strange than ugly. It seems that the epithet of femme fatale has been circulating among the curious."

Repose: Portrait of Berthe Morisot (1870) reveals a more pensive, dreamy aspect of her character. Whereas Baudelaire's mistress Jeanne Duval was ravaged, grotesque, and repulsive in *Baudelaire's Mistress, Reclining* (1862), Berthe—resting, yet alert—is gentle, tender, and engaging. Berthe later told her

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daughter that "her left leg, half drawn back under the skirt, used to stiffen painfully, but Manet would not allow her to move, lest the skirt be disarranged."

Modern critics have followed Théodore Duret in perceiving the sexual tension in the portrait: "The young woman with her air of melancholy, her deep eyes, her supple, slender body, is innocently seductive." Beatrice Farwell, more recently, also noted its sensual aspects: "the relaxed position, the air of reverie, the indirect gaze relate it to the traditional representation of Oriental and erotic fantasy." Françoise Cachin observed that "The overstuffed couch and the Japanese triptych above . . . suggest Morisot's personality, poised between bourgeois comfort and the hazards of artistic experience."

Berthe Morisot with a Bunch of Violets (1872) is Manet's most intensely Spanish, most beautiful, and most powerful portrait. Wearing her typical high-crowned black hat, its brim dipping down on her forehead, black scarf, and black dress—with her white blouse open at the neck and pointing to the corsage of violets—she confronts the viewer directly and close to the frame of the picture.

Paul Valéry described its emotional impact:

> What struck me before all else was the black—the absolute black of a little mourning hat, along with its tie strings as they mingle among the locks of chestnut hair with rosy gleams of light on them; it is a black that could only be Manet's.
>
> These startling passages of intense black enclose and emphasize a face whose too-large, dark eyes have an absent-minded, almost a distant expression. The painting is fluid, coming easily, obediently to the supple brush stroke; and the shadows on the face are so transparent, the lights so delicate, that it makes me think of the tender and precious molding of that head of a young woman, by Vermeer.

After Morisot's death, her daughter revealed the special significance of this valedictory portrait. Just after completing it, Manet urged Berthe to marry his brother Eugène: "Mama told me that she had posed for this picture the day before a Thursday dinner they had at Bonne Maman's restaurant. On that day my Uncle Edouard told Mama that she ought to marry Papa."

Portrait of Berthe Morisot with Hat, in Mourning (1874) (for her father) portrays Berthe with dramatic intensity, like a tragic heroine in a play by Racine. Morisot, painted in a looser style and with broader strokes, is set against a dark swirling background and seated on a gold-flecked chair. Degas owned this stunning portrait which, as Ann Dumas pointed out, demonstrated "extraordinary empathy for his subject's grief" and is "unique in Manet's oeuvre for its unrestrained expression of strong feeling."

Berthe Morisot with Fan (a watercolor of 1874) is more spontaneous and seems to catch her by surprise. Dressed once more in mournful black, holding an open black fan, with loose black flowing hair and a black ribbon around her neck, she's seen in three-quarter view, tilting slightly to the left. Manet placed a gold ring on her finger and gave her this graceful portrait as a wedding present.

The sheer number and beauty of these portraits naturally arouse curiosity about the intimate relations of Manet and Morisot. She was certainly in love with him, and jealous of Eva Gonzalès and Suzanne. George Moore, always a close observer, stated "there can be little doubt that she would have married Manet if Manet had not been married already." One modern critic naively claimed that "as a gentleman, an 'honnête homme,' [Manet] would never tarnish her respectability by suggesting an illicit liaison." But liaisons, if discreet, had always been tolerated in good society, and overwhelming passion, especially in artistic circles, often defied social conventions. His friend Duret pointed out that "after Edma was married [in 1869], Berthe used to work with Manet in his studio. From that moment she passed under his immediate influence." Her letters show that her love for Manet was the most passionate experience of her life.

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New poems
by Joshua Harmon & Neil Azevedo

Overpass

Beyond the clouds' crumpled page, a winter water-
mark of sun. The houses lean on the wind, another

transient body of wind within weather, an unbound
spill of smoke, soot to smudge these hills. A clutter

gates the raw fence of wood, woods where trees rake
air for what a wind can carry—dust, leaves, paper

scraps which tell no story but that of tangled flight.
The hills ring, delimit a sense of risk. Seen, here,

from overhead, asphalt's conduit sends and receives,
retrieves passing messages, overheard whispers

we cannot quite decipher. All along its edges
are scattered cast-off rags, torn strips of rubber.

—Joshua Harmon

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Landscape

Trepanned: in other words, my mind wanders
no further than the map I drew from memory,

marking the stone-circled embers memory makes smoke
—wisps to occlude whatever arrow-line I'd draw next.

Next is the legend: asterisk for tree, circle for settlement,
double dagger for ruins, circled star for fallen star,

wave of my hand for broken satellite, exhalation for
exhalation spent climbing the rise step by step toward

the form of the field, the retirement of assent.
Here the lake, here site of ambush, here fallen king.

The thistle's tendency—its bent posture—toward the oracular.
The wolf's basking ruse.

—Joshua Harmon

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Animi cruciatus

(Affliction of spirit)

Imagine the bullet cracking her skull,
entering the frontal lobe, the blood
under her face like a halo, the flood
of her final breath, inhaled and exhaled, full
of peppermint and smoke, or her head
pressing down on her warm, wet hair.
There is no peace in the sound of a prayer,
just as there is no sound in the dead
silence of an eyelid or leg muscle
at three-thirty-six in the morning
that's the repetitive language of sin
not surrendering in sweat and hustle,
movement attempting to hide all warning,
a ritual peculiar to angels and to man.

—*Neil Azevedo*

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Reconsiderations

Conrad's Latin America

by Mark Falcoff

Last year marked the hundredth anniversary of the publication of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*. Although not among his best-known works, it is in many ways his most remarkable. Indeed, it could be said to be the most significant, the most fully fleshed-out of his three "political" novels, which also include *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. *Nostromo* is "about" imperialism and its impact upon a small, fictitious, but vividly rendered South American republic called Costaguana. In spite of the left-wing vaporings of the late Martin Seymour-Smith, which disfigure the introduction to my Penguin edition, it is by no means an anti-imperialist tract. If it has a point of view at all on the interaction between foreign capital and backward Third World countries, it is that in the end the latter are undeserving of the former and that the forces of modernization outside of the orbit of European civilization are ultimately bound to fail. *Nostromo* is therefore a deeply pessimistic—which is to say a thoroughly conservative—book.

But it is something more than that. Although Latin American literature itself is understandably rich in novels dealing with political disorder, militarism, dictatorship, revolution, and civil war, I know of no work in Spanish or Portuguese that provides so complete a sociology of these unfortunate, ill-starred societies. *Nostromo* is the best—the most enduring—political novel ever written about Latin America. It was the peculiar genius of Joseph Conrad to understand the enormous weight of history on the Latin American republics—the heritage of conquest, the inchoate nature of society, the primitive forms often assumed by the quest for political power ("a puerile and bloodthirsty game of murder and rapine played with terrible earnestness by depraved children"), the failure to reproduce the template of the Iberian metropolis—itself a rather out-of-date version of European civilization. Above all, Conrad understood the qualitative differences between Latin America and the Anglo-Saxon world, a gap which could not be bridged by mines, railroads, telegraphs, loans, and the repeating rifle alone—a point which a century later foreign bankers, diplomats, journalists, and self-styled humanitarians apparently have yet to grasp.

In some ways the principal character of the novel is the San Tomé silver mine, located in the province of Sulaco, where most of the action of the novel takes place. During the Spanish colonial period, we are told, the mine was a source of prosperity and a magnet for settlement, but by the time of the wars of independence in the early nineteenth century its most immediately accessible veins had been exhausted. For decades it has languished in deterioration and neglect, until a Costaguana Englishman by the name of Charles Gould takes it upon himself to revive it by the injection of fresh capital and

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the application of the latest technology. A descendant of an English adventurer who had received the San Tomé concession in exchange for assistance during the struggle against Spain a half-century before, Gould is a kind of practical idealist. He seeks to leverage advantage from the early globalization afoot at the time, as European and American capital searches for new and profitable opportunities in the periphery. To this end, he sets about visiting London and San Francisco in search of backers to revive the enterprise. Along the way he takes an English wife who emigrates to "his" country and is a major figure of the story.

The Goulds are ambitious people, but not in the sense of a left-wing cartoon; rather, they have a vision of civilization, of ordered progress, of the spreading of universal norms of justice and decency characteristic of the late Victorians. And for a time, at least, they make their vision come alive. Equally interesting are their foreign partners. A British railroad magnate who comes out to Sulaco is edified to discover that the local elite, at least, includes "cultured men, men to whom the conditions of civilized business were not unknown." The other is an American by the name of Holroyd, an iron and steel magnate whose main interest is actually less the making of money (at which he seems to be very good indeed) as to the spreading of "the purer forms of Christianity" among the heathen. For him the San Tomé mine is less an opportunity for profit than a hobby, "a great man's caprice." As Charles Gould explains to his wife, "a man of that sort can take up a thing or drop it when he likes. He will suffer from no sense of defeat. He may have to give in, or he may have to die tomorrow, but the great silver and iron interests shall survive, and some day shall get ahold of Costaguana along with the rest of the world."

The revival of the mine, which occurs early in the book, produces salutary effects all along the line. The first and most obvious is a change in the quality of Costaguana's political leadership. Somewhat before the story begins we are told that the country has only recently emerged from decades of a savage dictatorship under a primitive, bloodthirsty tyrant by the name of Guzmán Bento; now, with a new, predictable source of income and the capacity to contract European loans, it has a different sort of chief of state: Don Vicente Ribera is the first civilian to occupy the presidency in the republic's history. This improvement is understandably reassuring to foreign investors; for his part, the British railroad magnate regards Don Vicente as embodying "the triumph of the best elements in the State." Here Conrad subtly underscores an unfortunate but historically indisputable fact—that in Latin American countries, the least broadly representative leaders have often turned out to be the best, with the most representative turning out to be even more often quite the opposite.

The foreign influence in Sulaco, though evidently crucial to the development of the mine, is by no means limited to it. Indeed, the entire society can "work" only because its key figures are not Costaguanan at all, but rather Europeans (assisted, to be sure, by a handful of locals with intimate European connections). Apart from the Goulds, the principal actors in the story are Martin Decoud, a cynical *boulevardier* of French descent and mentality, Captain Joseph Mitchell, the British chief of the Ocean Steam Navigation Company, Dr. Monygham, an expatriate Scottish physician, and Giorgio Viola, a former *Garabaldino* who after years of fighting monarchs and bishops in his native Italy has come to roost in Sulaco.

Viola, who runs a local inn frequented by the port workers, is an old-style revolutionary of the 1848 type who has been defeated after a selfless struggle for his ideals. His role in the story is apparently to provide a proper contrast to the bogus "revolutionaries" solely motivated by the quest for booty that Conrad has rushing across the stage at a crucial point in the story. Another Italian in the story who acts as a kind of *deus ex machina* is Giann'Batista, the chief of the

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stevedores, known by his employers as *Nostromo*, literally "our man." He embodies the intelligent application of European-style organization and discipline at the lowest level of technology; without him and his skilled laborers, mostly Italian, the port of Sulaco cannot function. Here Conrad seems to be saying that to accomplish even the most ordinary, everyday tasks, Costaguanans must import foreigners.

In fact, apart from Don Antonio Avellanos, "former minister to the courts of England, Spain, etc., etc." and his beautiful daughter Antonia, the only Costaguanan in the book who has a major speaking role is Padre Corbelán, a former missionary to the Indians who has a Jesuitical appetite for intrigue and who maintains useful contacts on both sides of the law. His twin obsessions are the restitution of church property confiscated after the wars of independence and the granting of a pardon to a certain Hernández, a rural bandit whom he regards as an innocent victim of social injustice.

Thanks to the regeneration of the San Tomé mine, peace and prosperity have returned to Sulaco and the republic of which it forms a crucial part. But not for long. The serpent in the garden is General Montero, the minister of war, a backwoods fighter who has lately been catapulted to flag rank and cabinet status by the simple expedient of throwing his lot in with the victorious party at a crucial moment in a civil war. The sudden transformation of Sulaco's fortunes whets the general's appetite for a greater share of power and wealth, and impels him to a *pronunciamiento* against the government of which he forms a part. In this he is goaded on by his brother Pedrito, a former guerrilla fighter whose curriculum also includes extensive service as a domestic in the Costaguanan Legation in Paris, where his own delusions of grandeur have been fed by the spectacle of late Napoleonic France. It is Pedrito who acts as the chief strategist and theoretician of the Monterist revolution, draping an expedition for plunder in the language of class and racial war, with a dollop of "anti-imperialism" thrown in for good measure. A succulent sample of Monterist rhetoric is served up when one of Montero's partisans—a provincial deputy who until recently was a partisan of the Gould concession and the government in Santa Marta—declares to a howling mob that

> war should be declared against France, England, Germany, and the United States, who by introducing railways, mining enterprises, colonization, and other such shallow pretenses, aimed at robbing the poor people of their lands, and with the help of these Goths and paralytics, the aristocrats would convert them into toiling and miserable slaves.

In fact, the deputy's comments represent precisely the opposite of the truth. There is nothing particularly oppressive about the established order. It is, indeed, a vast improvement over what has preceded it. As for the workers of the mine, they are better housed, fed, and cared for under the Gould regime than day laborers anywhere else in the republic. More than that: the "harassed, half-wild Indians" who labor at San Tomé have come to cherish a sense of belonging to a major enterprise. "They were proud of, and attached to, the mine," Conrad writes. "It had secured their confidence and belief." For them, politics was nothing but an abstraction, something for townspeople to squabble over; the mine was something real that affected the quality of their lives. Thus while other country people heed the Monterist call for revolt, the mine workers themselves remain loyal to their employers.

The Montero brothers' revolutionary horde is a jerry-built confection of malcontents, but for all that reasonably effective. At one point, indeed, it appears that the Monterists have captured the capital and are making their way across the mountains to Sulaco. Their main objective is to take control of the mine, but their more proximate goal is to lay their hands on the silver ingots stored in the Customs House destined for shipment to Europe on the next packet

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boat. The sudden shift of fortunes on the battlefield renders Gould's position in Sulaco increasingly tenuous, but desperate times call for desperate measures. It is decided to hide the ingots on one of the deserted islands just outside the entry to the port. Nostromo and Decoud convey the silver across the water in a flimsy lighter under the cover of darkness, accidentally crashing into a larger ship full of rebel troops but eventually reaching their destination. (The riveting narrative of their journey through the Golfo Plácido is one that only an experienced sailor like Conrad could render so convincingly.)

Leaving Decoud in charge of the treasure, Nostromo swims back to land. When the vanguard of the Monterist forces reaches Sulaco and discovers the silver missing from the Customs House, they take it into their head that it has been buried on the continental shelf. An entire contingent of rebel troops is set to trawling the limitless deep—to no effect, except to keep them out of the military engagement which decides the outcome of the war.

Meanwhile, Pedrito Montero has arrived in Sulaco at the head of a marauding band. He grandly receives Charles Gould in what was once the grand salon of the gentleman's club of Sulaco, now a smoldering ruin thanks to a sacking by the Monterist mob. He imagines that he has the Englishman in his power. But the two men are motivated by entirely different considerations, and, because of this very fact, the tables are turned in what should have been a wholly unequal confrontation. Montero is driven entirely by the quest for unearned wealth. He imagines that the first installment in his portfolio will be the San Tomé mine. What he fails to see is that for Charles Gould the enterprise is far more than a cherished piece of property—it represents his ideals, his vision for the country, his very identity. And rather than turn it over to a scalawag like Montero, he is prepared to blow the entire business sky-high. (He has ordered his employees to mine the tunnels with dynamite and wait upon his word to ignite it.) To be sure, Gould expects to be killed. But what of it?, he jeeringly asks Montero.

> [O]nce dead, where was the power capable of resuscitating such an enterprise in all its vigor and wealth out of the ashes and ruin of destruction? There was no such power in the country. And where was the skill and capital abroad that would condescend to touch such an ill-omened corpse?

"The [revolutionary] Government can certainly bring about the destruction of the San Tomé mine if it likes," Gould warns him, "but without me it can do nothing else." He goes on to sketch out "the ruin of all other undertakings, the withdrawal of European capital, the withholding, most probably, of the last installment of the foreign loan."

The day is saved for Gould, for the mine, for the established order in Sulaco, through three expedients. The first is a perilous journey undertaken by Nostromo through enemy territory to convince a loyalist general to lift the siege of the town by bringing relief troops around by sea. The second is a blanket pardon granted to Hernández the bandit and his outlaw hordes (brokered by Father Corbelán) in exchange for an attack on the Monterist forces from the rear. The third is a decision by the elite of the town to separate entirely from Costaguana and declare independence as the Occidental Republic, with Hernández—now gazetted a general—as its first minister of war. What has become a conflict between two distinctive territorial entities is brought to an end by an international naval demonstration when a U.S. cruiser is the first to salute the Occidental flag ("white, with a wreath of laurel in the middle encircling a yellow amarilla flower").

It seems extraordinary that any work of fiction could so skillfully compress so much South American history. Students of the subject will readily recognize in Conrad's Costaguana pieces and chunks of nineteenth-century Haiti, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Venezuela, all seamlessly knit together in a

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coherent whole. The principality is rendered so true to life that at times the reader is tempted to doubt that it is an imaginary creation at all. A thousand tiny details—the "luxuriant beauty of [Sulaco's] orange gardens bearing witness to its antiquity"; Padre Corbelàn's refusal of an Episcopal palace for a residence, "prefer[ing] to hang his shabby hammock amongst the rubble and spiders of the sequestered Dominican Convent"; the *posada* kept by a retired Mexican bullfighter where the plotters gather; the new attorney-general of the rebel republic, a defrocked notary, "whom the revolution had found languishing in the common jail on a charge of forging documents"; General Montero's "imbecile and domineering stare," his reading ability limited to "spel[ling] out the print in newspapers," "the various Parisian hotels where the Costaguanan Legation sheltered its diplomatic dignity"; the legend that the dictator Guzmàn Bento's corpse "had been carried off by the devil in person from the brick mausoleum in the nave of the Church of the Assumption"; even Mrs. Gould's crushing political naïveté—paint a more convincing picture than most novelists can reasonably be expected to achieve.

But what is more remarkable still is how little has changed in the region since the book was written. General Montero foreshadows a whole host of counterfeit social revolutionaries in uniform to come along throughout the twentieth century, from Mexico's General Plutarco Elías Calles, Bolivia's Colonel Germán Busch, Argentina's General Juan Perón, Colombia's General Rojas Pinilla, Peru's General Velasco Alvarado, to present-day Venezuela's irredeemably silly Colonel Hugo Chávez. Montero's brother Pedrito, too, is a type well known to the contemporary scene, a kind of *proto*-Sandinista, a skilled guerrilla fighter-cum-ideologue whose main objective is wealth and power but who brandishes—somewhat unconvincingly, it is true—Western liberal language to disguise his true motivations. (Another practitioner of the art, without the distinction of battle honors, might be Haiti's recently exiled ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.) Even Father Corbelán seems remarkably ahead of his time, his left-wing clericalism a sort of precursor of Liberation Theology. He might be said to represent the perennial clash between Catholic social doctrine and the imperatives of material progress.

The major point to make here, however, is not that Monterism—as we might call it—is something found only on the fringes of "normal" political life in Latin America. A mere decade and a half ago Argentina's president Raúl Alfonsín—a lawyer, a civilian, democratically elected—made a speech declaring that the United States purposely lent money to his country "so that it won't develop." More recently, Bolivia's President Carlos Mesa staged a plebiscite whose apparent objective was to withdraw his country's participation in the international natural gas market, thus assuring it another four centuries of extreme poverty, at the same time encouraging the region where the gas itself is found to seriously consider secession. And every day of the week Argentina's unfortunate president Néstor Kirchner makes some statement which sounds as if he were speaking not from the presidential palace in Buenos Aires but from the armed camp of Pedrito Montero; as one of his critics pointed out, he represents those many Argentines for whom the acquisition of wealth is "a matter of waiting to win the lottery."

With stunning prescience, Conrad saw that at the very moment when European imperialism was nearing its apogee, its antithesis—what the French call *tiermondisme*—lurked just over the horizon, in the fullness of time to demonstrate that whatever the sins of colonialism, what was bound to follow could conceivably be worse, perhaps even far worse. *Nostromo* is a supreme work of art which is also a prophecy, one which more often than not has been amply fulfilled.

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Art

Photography's painter

by Karen Wilkin

These days, the boundaries between forms of visual art are permeable. Artists produce work that resists being relegated to strict categories, cheerfully combining paint, photo-based imagery, computer manipulations, three-dimensional construction, found objects, video projections, and a host of processes I probably can't even guess at, without concern for how the result might be classified. Once, however, distinctions between mediums were extremely important, for all sorts of reasons ranging from the aesthetic to the sociological. The *paragone*—the comparison of the worth of painting and drawing—had been a serious topic of discussion from classical times to the eighteenth century, with drawing usually deemed superior because, the reasoning went, an outline without color still could be a convincing image, while color that was not organized by drawing (pre-Abstract Expressionism, at least) would be meaningless. In the Renaissance, the relative merits of painting and sculpture were rigorously considered. In an effort to distinguish their work from that of mere artisans, painters declared themselves to be intellectual practitioners of a liberal art, in contrast to sculptors, who were essentially manual laborers. As Leonardo pointed out, sculptors got hot and dusty, while painters, dressed in elegant clothes, dipped their brushes in beautiful colors and listened to learned discourse. Moreover, as he wrote in his notebooks, sculpture was incapable of achieving painting's illusionistic effects. How could a sculptor evoke, say, a running stream, with plants, rocks, and swimming fish seen under water, by carving stone, as a painter could with pigment?

All of these arguments are rooted in the assumption that the artist's role is to reproduce what can be perceived, so it is not surprising that the debate intensified with the advent of a new medium—photography—that, initially at least, seemed to be the ultimate mimetic tool. Once photographs had become something other than technological curiosities, artists often regarded the new phenomenon with suspicion. Painters who had spent years learning how to reproduce the world around them with fidelity were frequently hostile to a new "mechanical" device that seemed to confer that hard-won skill on just about anyone. No photograph, many held, could rival art. Photography, it was assumed, replicated everything placed before the camera, accurately but unselectively, according equal emphasis to whatever came within the mechanical eye's field of vision; artists, by contrast, no matter how dedicated they were to being faithful to appearances, constantly arranged, adjusted, altered, and shifted emphasis, in order to make visible an ideal world (by correcting nature's imperfect parts) or to heighten expressiveness.

But photography's potential as a way of making art, as well as a means of uncritical documentation, rapidly revealed itself. Some early photographers strove to make pictures

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that looked as much like paintings as possible, choosing motifs that painters would have selected, softening focus, and exaggerating contrast to simplify tonal range in an effort to suppress details and make the result look "painterly." Others reveled in the camera's ability to record detail, attempting to rival the most accomplished—and high-minded—Academicians by staging history paintings and allegories with live models. (The preposterous results are now often prized as monuments of High Camp.) Artists, too, were fascinated by the alluring new medium. By the 1850s, Gustave Courbet, whose understanding of the power of self-promotion would serve him well if he were working today, had already grasped photography's usefulness as a way of recording and publicizing his paintings. By the early 1860s, he routinely had photographs made of his major pictures and sold them both to promote the work and to generate additional income beyond the sale price of a single painting; later he sold the rights to photographic reproduction of certain works. As a mature, established painter, Edgar Degas became an avid photographer who obliged his friends to pose to the point where they complained. A few surviving prints also suggest that he took photographs to use as starting points or aids to making work in other mediums; a handful of tantalizing images of dancers and nudes seems unquestionably to be the bases of pastels and sculptures. Still later, Thomas Eakins, probably inspired by Eadweard Muybridge's "stop-time" sequences, used photography as a means of studying the human body in motion, exploiting its ability to capture transitional poses that eluded the draftsman's pencil.

By the 1870s, using photographs to supplement direct observation of the motif had become widespread, although few artists seem to have mastered the process of taking their own pictures, as Degas and later Eakins did. The laws of supply and demand being what they are, sellers of photographs filled the gap, providing images for artists' use. Testimony to how established the practice had become by the late 1870s is provided by a notice placed by the well-known publisher, editor, and seller of photographs, Auguste Giraudon, announcing that he had "commissioned a painter" (who wished to remain anonymous) "to do a series of photographic studies of peasants at work in the forest near Barbizon." The results were to be sold to artists to be used as generating images for their own efforts. The market for such studies, as scholars of the period have pointed out, can be inferred from the location of Giraudon's gallery—on the rue Bonaparte, across the street from the Ecole des Beaux-arts.

The fruits of this interesting commission were recently discovered in a private collection in France. It is a remarkable group of works, a series of iconic images of rural France or perhaps more accurately, of an idealized, invented rural France, a celebration of the virtues of outdoor labor in "la France profonde." Many of the images are powerful in their own right; their arresting compositions and rich orchestrations of texture and tone are evidence that a sensitive eye was at work. But what is specially interesting is that the series has uncanny parallels with paintings of the period. Picture after picture of sturdy young shepherdesses, peasant girls, and young men in smocks, all with clumsy *sabots*, recall the works of Jean-François Millet, Camille Pissarro, and even Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, a correspondence that both confirms the intimate relationship of photography to painting at the time and raises interesting questions about that relationship.

During the month of December, this relationship was suggestively probed in "The Figure and the Forest: Nineteenth-Century French Photographs and Drawings," a tightly focused, well-chosen exhibition that brought together a broad selection of photographs by "Giraudon's artist" and drawings by Corot, Millet, and members of the Barbizon School, including Theodore Rousseau and Narcisse-Virgile Diaz de la Pena, among others. (The exhibition was organized by a trio of dealer/scholars with ad-

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mirable expertise in nineteenth-century drawings and photography: Jill Newhouse, Howard Greenberg, and Charles Isaacs.)[1] The show's bold, richly inflected drawings made as rapid responses to the complexity of landscape, along with its equally compelling photographs, offered abundant aesthetic rewards and suggested provocative comparisons, yet the effect of the whole was larger than the sum of its parts. Together, the works in the two disciplines made us consider the nature of reality, the role of photography in creating myth as well as in recording ostensible fact, the similarities and differences between the painter's and the photographer's eye, and much more.

If there is still anyone who believes that photographs can provide an unmediated, dispassionate view of the world, the images by "Giraudon's artist" in "The Figure and the Forest" would be enough to disprove the notion. Far from being truthful views of peasants going about their normal activities, it is plain that the photos were as carefully composed and staged as any studio set-up. Just as in Millet's paintings and drawings, the protagonists of the images appear to be so absorbed in their work or so stupefied by their labor that they are oblivious of the presence of any observer—an obvious impossibility, no matter how potent the illusion, given the cumbersome equipment and slow exposures of the period. In one startling exception, a young woman bent under a load of firewood smiles at the photographer, while in another, a self-possessed girl, resting on sort of wheelbarrow, stares at him, as boldly as Manet's Olympia. The photographs as a group offer further clues to the artifice that underlies them. The same hedgerow is used as background for different motifs, and there are multiple versions of related activities; even the animals seem posed. In one very beautiful picture, a woman bends forward, pretending to shear a newly shorn sheep. And so on. To heighten the illusion of indifference or lack of acknowledgment of the viewer and to intensify the sense of introspection and absorption, figures are seen in profile; they bend so their faces are obscured or turn away from the camera's intrusive eye. Confronted by these deliberately contrived contrasts, we remain convinced of the truth of what has been captured even as we take into account how carefully the images were crafted.

The tension between our fictive sense of being an omniscient beholder of real life and our simultaneous awareness of the unreality of what has been recorded was a considerable part of the pleasure offered by the Giraudon photographs, but in purely visual terms, they offered even more. Many images are hard to forget. A pair of young women resting on sheaves of hay, against a background of coarse leaves, became a sculptural exercise in opposed postures: one figure, her back to us, leans into the space of the image and the other shifts slightly out of strict profile, head lowered, eyes downcast, arms resting on her knees. A variant on the theme showed the same pair of women, each holding a sheaf, one lost in thought at the bottom of the composition, the other, in profile, creating a powerful triangular shape with her bundle of hay, both playing their role in a gorgeous orchestration of linear patterns and subtly modulated tones. A mysterious photo of birdnesters centered on two boys, one standing on the other's back to reach the branches of a tree, against a blurred orchard. The boys turn into a kind of totem made more eloquent by the contrast between the sense of transient, brilliant light and the palpable sense of weight, transferred downward from the standing boy to the back of the hunched companion supporting him. Some specially beautiful images seemed to enter into a dialogue with Pissarro and Millet. In *Two Women Harvesting*, the figures, one facing forward, one in profile, are so sharply bent at the waist that they are reduced to little more than the light rectangles of their caps, the vertical strokes of their arms, and

1 "The Figure and the Forest: Nineteenth-Century French Photographs and Drawings" was on view from December 6 through December 22, 2004 at Kate Ganz Gallery, New York.

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the curves of their backs. In *Peasant Standing in Dappled Light Holding a Rake*, a young woman extends one arm and decorously touches her throat with her other hand, turning her head sharply into profile, like a figure in an archaic frieze. The rich, subtle tonal range and staccato rhythms of dark and light seem the equivalents of the broken, close-valued color of Impressionist paintings of the period. It is unlikely, given the Romantic view of peasant life announced by these images and their rather self-consciously "artistic" poses, that their author was a particularly progressive painter. Yet there is ample evidence in his images that in the overtly modern medium of photography, at least, he rejected the Academy's hierarchical adulation of the antique in favor of a celebration of one aspect of ordinary life, however artfully manipulated and presented. That the way of life he claimed to report on in his photographs was itself already beginning to change, under the pressures of the industrial revolution and growing urbanization, adds poignancy to the images, although it is probably an exaggeration to assign such awareness to him.

Since all of the drawings in "The Figure and the Forest" predated the photographs by "Giraudon's artist" and since most were of landscape motifs, rather than of figures, the correspondences between the works in the two mediums did not seem, at first acquaintance, to be always ideal. When there were real overlaps, the effect was dramatic. An economical pen and ink drawing by Millet, *Two Shepherds Conversing* (1866), for example, had such uncanny resonance with the photograph *Two Boys Resting*, from the bent-legged pose of one figure to the kicked-off *sabots*, that it made you long for more such extraordinary comparisons. Yet from another point of view, the Barbizon School landscape drawings that were the mainstay of the show were, in fact, closer to the photographs by "Giraudon's artist" than they first appeared to be. Rousseau's vigorous ink studies of trees were done *en plein air* to capture the artist's response to nature and to inform his work on canvas, while the photographs by "Giraudon's artist," described as *études d'après nature*, were intended to serve a similar function. The photographic *études* represent an effort to adapt a new medium to traditional practice. Both drawings and photographs are artfully considered interpretations, carefully selected constructions, intended to bridge the gap between raw, unedited actuality and art. It's worth noting, too, that despite the differences in date and of subject, many of the same visual qualities were present in the works in both mediums, most notably the restless play of light on foliage. It's a recurring theme in the photographs, where ivy-covered walls and leafy backgrounds set off the simplified shapes of peasant clothing, and it's the main building block of the Barbizon drawings, reconstituted as a flicker of pen marks across the surface of the paper.

The myriad connections between technological developments and aesthetic evolution in the nineteenth century are an endlessly absorbing subject. The advent of photography was only one element in a complex disruption of established norms that ranged from how artists changed their practice once stable, commercially prepared paint became available in easily portable tubes, to the way increasingly rapid travel by railroad affected perception and an artist's choice of subject matter. But it is obviously impossible to unravel cause and effect during the years when innovations in the arts and technology were inextricably bound up with each other —and with sociological and economic change, as well—but that's another matter. The interesting combination of works in "The Figure and the Forest" underlined the difficulties of clarifying cause and effect. In the end, however, trying to reach a decision about what influenced what seemed unimportant. Whatever the sequence of cause and effect, it was an absorbing, thought-provoking exhibition.

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Gallery chronicle

by James Panero

Several years ago, at a panel of art academics, I witnessed an eye-opening event. Behind an array of dons were projected the images of two Picasso paintings—one, an abstract arrangement of colored shapes, the other, a figure. After a surfeit of deliberations on the circumstances of production, theories of sexuality, and the artist's "gaze," a student from the audience stood to make an observation. This abstract image, he suggested, mirrored key shapes in the figural work; namely, one could see a resemblance between the purple void carved out by the legs of the figure on the one side, and the dominant, diamond-shape field in the abstraction on the other. He was right. An artist we knew so well could still surprise. Picasso buried his mysteries right there out in the open.

With his inventiveness and range, Picasso created his own artistic canon. More often than not, he quoted himself. He explored classicism and a host of themes following World War I, but he rooted his language in a syntax developed in cubism. Cubism's explosive tension between surface and depth echoed throughout his production. It also provided a means of dissimulation. Only Picasso could paint a purple diamond in an abstract design and suggest, ever so subtly, that you were looking at a woman's crotch. You might say Picasso put the sex in abstraction and never took it back—even when he should have.

Max Beckmann (1884–1950), a contemporary of Picasso (1881–1973), also developed his own artistic language. But whereas Picasso did so out of force of will, Beckmann did so out of a felt necessity. "The German painter needs to be invented," he wrote in 1926. Ten years later, that necessity took on a political dimension. Beckmann was labeled a degenerate artist by the Nazi regime. As he fled to Paris and then Holland, Beckmann used a developing visual mythology to conceal his own misgivings about the deteriorating state of affairs. If Picasso was sex-obsessed, Beckmann became haunted by his own country and the prospects of war.

Secretive, individual, and self-referential, Beckmann and Picasso were two artists who seemed to follow parallel paths in modern art. For the first time, we can now explore their possible convergence. Richard L. Feigen (the Beckmann expert) and Jan Krugier (Picasso) have pooled their resources for an exhibition, at the Feigen gallery, that will no doubt be the start of a larger investigation.

The lines of connection seem to be everywhere in "Beckmann-Picasso/Picasso-Beckmann."[1] This is as true for Picasso, of whom we think we know everything, as for Beckmann, of whom we still know very little. Picasso's publicity and Beckmann's privacy could both screen us from their full accomplishments.

1 "Beckmann-Picasso/Picasso-Beckmann" opened at Richard L. Feigen & Co., New York, on October 30, 2004, and remains on view through January 31, 2005.

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Early Beckmann is represented here through an assortment of drypoint prints that can only be described as "northern." *Theater* (1916) twists and squeezes Gilda and the Duke of Mantua from Verdi's *Rigoletto* into a visual cacophony. *Prosit Neujahr* (1917), perhaps the best of these early examples, finds revelers blowing kazoos with eyes bulging, an entire back-story of characterization worked into each of their faces. The earliest painting on display, *Artist at the Beach* (1930), brings Marsden Hartley's late-life bathers to mind. *Matrose* (1936), a large self-portrait of the artist as a Dutch seaman reading an anti-fascist newspaper, hints at the more mythological portraits to come. It also reveals Beckmann's emerging political sensibility.

While Beckmann's visual mythology began to take shape in the 1930s, *Corrida* (1934), one of the earlier Picassos here on display, is already a mature work. A flattened bull wraps his neck around the twisted figure of a horse. Guts spill out of a belly. The painting prefigures *Guernica*—but yes, perhaps something is missing.

An underlying argument of this exhibition may be that this "something" came from Beckmann. Picasso may have turned Beckmann on to a fuller understanding of surface (he turned the world on to a fuller understanding of surface), but Beckmann may have imparted to Picasso a more expressive brush and a broader range of imagery. "Whereas Picasso renders only modern types, Beckmann mixes the legendary and the modern," writes Barbara C. Buenger, who has contributed a free-standing essay for the show (there is no catalogue). This is mainly true—Beckmann is more broadly allegorical while Picasso engages more with the School of Paris. But in *Figure de femme inspirée par la guerre d'Espagne* (1937), the most Beckmann-like Picasso in the show, we find symbols—flags and crowns—that do not come from Picasso's standard repertoire of stock images. This painting also employs a hasty hatch-work that runs contrary to Picasso's usual taste for fastidiousness and the thin application of paint. When compared to Beckmann's *Kinder des Zweilichts (Orkus)* (1939), a brushy dream full of netherworld nobility, circles, fish, and eyes, the similarities appear all too obvious. The same may be said in the opposite way as Beckmann relies on recurring surface shapes in his later work. In *Soldier's Dream* (1942), the circle may be a clock, the end of a trumpet, or the edge of a mirror. In other paintings, Beckmann's profile becomes an iconic form, just as Picasso styles himself the artist-bull in *Palette et tête de taureau* (1938). Beckmann becomes increasingly sensitive to the kinetic powers of a unified surface just as Picasso took on a more expressive brush.

These artists were not close, although they followed each other's work. Picasso reported (to Krugier) that he visited Beckmann's 1931 Paris show every day it ran. Their debt to one another may only be fleshed out with fuller treatment—this show, albeit wisely assembled, is just the start, and too many questions are left unanswered. The sculptures here, for one, bear out no apparent relation between artists. Is this true across the board? Picasso's later production—he outlived Beckmann by over two decades—also trails off indeterminately in the current hanging. There are hints that Picasso finally "got" Beckmann after Beckmann's death—Picasso's *Bouquet* (1969) is compared to Beckmann's *Oyster Eaters* (1943) in the gallery lobby—but why then? This exhibition can be exciting because it raises such questions. I hope the future bears out a few more answers.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925–1972) may be about the most honest photographer around. He never hid behind his camera. Rather, the camera in his hands became a tool for experimentation, manipulation, abstraction, and the visualizing of a private cosmos. He staged his shots. He placed his family and friends in the derelict buildings around his hometown of Lexington, Kentucky. He composed his images with the care of a Poussin. "When looking at a selection of Meatyard's photographs," writes Cynthia Young, the curator of a major new retrospective at the International Center of Photog-

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raphy, "one might think that several different photographers made them. The abstract work seems different from the no-focus imagery, which in turn seems different from the landscapes, the portraits, or the pictures of his family."[2] Different though they may be, his photographs share the same easy-going nature of what simply comes to mind after a lifetime of thought.

The current exhibition of over 150 photographs at ICP has been assembled with the help of Guy Davenport, the University of Kentucky professor and writer (including for this magazine) who was an early champion of Meatyard's work. In 1974, in an essay reproduced in the ICP catalogue, Davenport wrote, "I remember thinking that here was a photographer who might illustrate the ghost stories of Henry James, a photographer who got many of his best effects by introducing exactly the right touch of the unusual into an authentically banal American usualness."

Meatyard could tap into something rooted in America without falling prey to typical banalities. To my eyes, his early Georgetown Street scenes and his American flag series border on the sentimental, as do some of his more countrified landscapes. Yet Meatyard's symbolist "motion-sound" series captured the wind rustling through the grass without affect. His "Family Album of Lucybelle Crater" (1969–1972), featuring his own family posing in grotesque masks (inspired by Flannery O'Connor's 1955 story "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"), beat out Cindy Sherman by years and did it better. His poetic portraits of Wendell Berry, Guy Davenport, and Thomas Merton could be soulful and mesmerizing and illustrative of the creative spirit. After a visit from Meatyard and two friends, "Merton joked that he had received 'three kings from Lexington' at the hermitage," according to the Merton biographer Paul Elie. With painterly photographs by a richly American artist, this exhibition has a nobility that is rarely captured by the cold stare of the camera lens.

The German periodical *London und Paris* once praised James Gillray (1756–1815) as "the foremost living artist in the whole of Europe." He lampooned the breadth of Europe—from his own Tory party to Whigs, Jacobins, Germans, smallpox vaccinations, Edmund Burke, King George IV, Queen Charlotte, Prime Minister William Pitt, to his favorite target, Napoleon Bonaparte ("Little Boney")—and still he was collected widely. Bonaparte himself was said to be particularly amused by *The first Kiss this Ten Years! . . . or . . . the meeting of Britannia & Citizen François* (1803), which features the skinny French general embracing a beach ball of a British lady. Gillray's talents for combining the political with the grotesque could not have come at a better time in history.

One-hundred-sixty prints and drawing from the restored collection of Samuel J. Tilden are now on display at the New York Public Library.[3] Trained at the Royal Academy, Gillray far outstripped his satirist contemporaries. In his sense for food and fat, he became an English Rubens. "Sallads and eggs and lighter fare/ Tune the Italian spark's guitar;/ And if I take Don Congreve right/ Pudding and beef make Britons fight," wrote Matthew Prior in 1718. As for gas—from the noble to the debased, from the pressure of a balloon, the firing of a canon, to an exploding bottle of sherry—Gillray was a master of drafting "hot air." The metaphor became real in his imagination and through his pen.

For all of our grousing, we cannot begin to match the heartburn and splenetics of life at the turn of the nineteenth century. Today's politics can taste quite bland once you work up a stomach for Gillray.

2 "Ralph Eugene Meatyard" opened at the International Center of Photography, New York, on December 10, 2004, and remains on view through February 27, 2005. A catalogue featuring an essay and interview with Guy Davenport has been published by ICP/Steidl (300 pages, $60).

3 "James Gillray" opened at the New York Public Library on October 29, 2004, and remains on view through January 30, 2005. An extensive online guide to the exhibition is available at www.nypl.org.

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Music

New York chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

At the end of its fall season, City Opera did something offbeat: It staged a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. That's not so offbeat, except that this musical wasn't one of the grander ones, wasn't *Oklahoma* or *South Pacific*: It was *Cinderella*, a humble girl. *Cinderella* isn't even properly a Broadway show, as it was composed for television. (Quick, name an opera composed for television: Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is first to come to mind.)

Where were you on the evening of March 31, 1957? If you were sentient and American, you were probably in front of your TV, watching *Cinderella*, which starred the 21-year-old angel Julie Andrews. The broadcast pulled in 107 million viewers, making it one of those national experiences we really don't have anymore. There are too many channels, too many options, too few leisure hours. A Rodgers and Hammerstein musical—what a wonderful reason for coming together!

Cinderella may not be a Rodgers and Hammerstein masterpiece, but it has its modest charms. To use a Puccini analogy, it is *La Rondine*, not *Madama Butterfly* or *Turandot*. Its best-known songs are probably "In My Own Little Corner" and "Impossible!" "Do I Love You Because You're Beautiful" isn't bad either. And if you're going to do a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, I've often argued, you might as well do it with opera singers, although that is an essay—a quite contentious essay—unto itself.

In any event, City Opera did not put on an operatic performance; it put on a Broadway performance. As far as I could tell, there was only one opera singer in this show, and he sang the Royal Herald. He was good, too. Also good was the young woman who did Cinderella, Sarah Uriarte Berry; she sang correctly and purely. And her stepsisters, those nasty gals? Portia was played by Ana Gasteyer, who rose to national prominence as a cast member for *Saturday Night Live*. She did a lot of singing on that show—commendable singing—and she is a superb comic actress. With Portia, she did all she could, which wasn't much. The other sister, Joy, was played by Lea DeLaria, an experienced Broadway and jazz performer. She played the part as a loutish lesbian, and on that subject, we'll have more in a moment.

Everyone was surprised and delighted to see Eartha Kitt as the Fairy Godmother. She looked wonderful, and did some trademark purring—but she was wrong for the music, and wrong for the part. She simply didn't sing it well, by proper showbiz standards. And you were ready to relish the veteran actors Dick Van Patten and Renée Taylor as the King and Queen—they would evince their charisma, display their professional timing, and talk their way through songs. But they were bad: almost completely flat on that stage, nearly amateurish. The audience poured love on them, though, as they did on everyone, especially the celebrities.

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A young man named Christopher Sieber looked great as the Prince, even if he sang (and acted) in un-princely fashion. In fact, the whole production—which entered City Opera's repertory in 1993—looked great. It looked like the fairy tale it should have been, like a Disney movie, complete with gilded carriage powered by white steeds.

I should now wade into a delicate subject: I have said that this was not an operatic production but a Broadway production; and that meant the intrusion of a campy-gay sensibility. This was perhaps not entirely fair to Rodgers and Hammerstein. A thousand other shows may beg for it, but does this one? The Stepmother was played by John Epperson, or, more precisely, by his female alter ego, Lypsinka (clever name). So, this was the opposite of a trouser role—a dress role, or in any case some travesty. Epperson was enjoyable, however, and he plainly enjoyed himself, dropping his voice, trying to shove his huge foot into that glass slipper. When he struck a Gloria Swanson pose—I was reliably informed it was that—his public went wild.

Throughout this show, there was a lot of wink-wink at the audience. You know: Amuse or scandalize the adults, and the kiddies will never be the wiser, just as in *Rocky and Bullwinkle* or, in a later era, *The Simpsons*. Mel Brooks's *Producers* has a song called "Keep It Gay." Apparently, that is a general Broadway credo, or command. And I was interested to read an article in a *New York Times* digest, about Epperson/Lypsinka. Title: "A Downtown Guy Gets to Play an Uptown Girl." I quote: "Epperson, who has been doing Lypsinka for more than 20 years, said that defying gender stereotypes was not his ambition in taking the role of the Stepmother. 'I tend to forget that I'm doing something that people find subversive and kind of naughty.'" I was struck by that phrase "gender stereotypes." Ponder it for a moment; it is representative of our times.

I wish to close with an observation about Richard Rodgers, a composer who is underrated, popular though he is. Two and a half years ago, I caught *Oklahoma!*, on Broadway. As I was leaving it, I had this unbidden thought: "I wish I had composed it. What a great score. Moreover, if some magical being gave me the choice of having composed *Oklahoma!* or having composed *The Tender Land*"—that is a Copland opera, set in the West, and otherwise similar to *Oklahoma!*—"I would pick the former. I really would. Unhesitatingly, as a matter of fact." And I report this as someone who is very fond of *The Tender Land*.

From *Cinderella* to the Bartók string quartets—that's quite a jump. But musical life is like that, and so is music itself. In an age, and place, with a lot of false diversity, music offers the real McCoy. (Forgive the banality of that statement, but it is true.) In any event, the Orion String Quartet presented the complete string quartets of Bartók over two concerts—three string quartets each—at Alice Tully Hall, under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The Orion is a popular ensemble, and, in fact, when they first appeared, their fans whooped as though at a rock concert.

The four men claim a lot for these Bartók works, as do others. A note in the program said, "For us in the Orion Quartet, the musical challenges and demands of these magnificent works have been as important as the Beethoven quartets in helping us define who we are as an ensemble." The new artistic directors of the Chamber Music Society—David Finckel and Wu Han (the husband-and-wife cello-and-piano team)—wrote, "The six quartets of Béla Bartók are a listening experience like no other." And Dr. Richard E. Rodda, in his program notes, said,

> The string quartets of Béla Bartók are monuments of music, unsurpassed by any body of work of any other composer: unimpeachable in their form and technique, with the tiniest motivic atom set spinning elegantly through the universe of an all-embracing structure; inventive yet masterful in their use of sonority; daring harmonically yet grounded in tradi-

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> tion; enormous in their range of expression. They are fundamental documents of 20th-century music, integral to the study of the disciple and the subject of many learned treatises. But the true importance of these masterpieces lies not in their demonstrable mastery of the craft of composition, not in the fierce intellect that attended their creation, but in the way that they allow us to share the spirit of one extraordinary man who affirmed his life—and ours—by wresting order from change and contradiction.

Well, then. Yes, they are important and excellent works—great works, to be sure—no matter what is said about them. Whether they should be presented all at once—bing, bing, bing, bang, bang, bang—is a different question. As I have remarked before, we are in an age mad for completeness, when you are really a dino if you aren't exhaustive. Not one Chopin ballade on a piano recital, but at least two, preferably three, and ideally all four. Do you want to see that we are a serious string quartet? Okay, we will play all six Bartóks in a row—though, sadly, we must resort to two concerts—and we won't taint the experience with anything else. This is an attitude that I think harmful to the concert world. In a majority of cases, composers didn't intend these works to be played in toto. But mine is very much a minority opinion. This month—January—the Takács String Quartet, under the Chamber Music Society, is playing the complete Beethoven string quartets, over six concerts.

The Orion played the Bartóks well. You could have objected here and there. I think that, in some instances, the players approached the music too reverently, instead of merely diving in. Their playing often had a tone of "This is a holy experience, and don't you forget it." I also think that they played much of the music too prettily. Some groups are too savage and raw in the Bartóks, and some are too elegant and polished. It's not easy to find the right balance. I would have favored more grittiness from the Orion, but that is a matter of taste. In some movements, I found myself thinking, "Tenser, tauter, spookier—this is too relaxed" (or too tentative). And technical missteps, including imprecision of attack, were detracting.

But the Orion's general mastery of the material was unquestionable, as was their great respect for it. Their fans certainly maintained their enthusiasm. So the grousing of a critic must be of little import.

Come, now, to the New York Philharmonic, where the music director, Lorin Maazel, has been away. Part of what he has been doing is completing his opera, *1984*, which will have its premiere at Covent Garden in May. There have been many substitutes—or guests—of whom we'll touch on three. James Conlon is a widely admired American, who has spent much of his career in Europe. He will be heard increasingly in the United States, however, as in the next couple of seasons he will take over the Ravinia Festival, in Chicago, and the Los Angeles Opera. He has long been talked about for music director of the Philharmonic or of the Metropolitan Opera.

In October, at Carnegie Hall, he led what has so far been one of the most successful concerts of the season, taking the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and Chorus through an all-Russian program (Mussorgsky, Rachmaninoff, and Shostakovich). He had a poorer outing with the Philharmonic, however—much poorer. His main offering was Mahler's Symphony No. 1, and it was something astonishing: dull. It is almost impossible to make this symphony dull. But in these hands, it was cautious, limp, pedestrian—dull. The notes were there, most of the time, but Mahler's character was not. Conductors, like Homer, are allowed to nod, and James Conlon will no doubt be more awake on future occasions.

No conductor is more ballyhooed than David Robertson—another American—whom some want to head the Philharmonic *right this second*. Can Maazel possibly be bumped off? Robertson has recently been hired by the St. Louis Symphony, but the

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Philharmonic has him guesting a lot, and he did two subscription concerts in a row. The first began with Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony, which was everything it should not have been: flaccid, indifferent, dull. It was not dissimilar to Conlon's Mahler, but somehow more offensive. The orchestra was a mess, technically, and there was zero musical spark to make up for it. You might have tolerated this performance in a college orchestra, but not in the New York Philharmonic. I have heard worthy Robertson performances, but this one had me thinking, "This is the conductor they're dying to have take over the Phil.? This is the conductor they want ol' Masur and ol' Maazel out of the way for?"

Ligeti's *Romanian Concerto* went far better, and Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony went somewhat better. Even so, the Mendelssohn did not rise above the level of competence, and lacked distinction, to put it charitably.

In the next concert, Robertson teamed with the young German violinist Christian Tetzlaff for a great—truly great—traversal of Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2. (The Orion String Quartet would have been disappointed that Tetzlaff played only one Bartók concerto.) The purely orchestral works on the program were a transcription of Steve Reich's Triple Quartet and the Beethoven Eighth Symphony. The Reich could have benefited from more flair—more musicality—minimalistic and straight-ahead though it may be. And the Beethoven performance was no disgrace: It was largely correct, and showed a basic understanding. Still, there was an overlay of mediocrity—some flabbiness, some time-beating, some "Another day, another dollar." The Allegretto scherzando was deprived of its grace and lilt, and the Allegro vivace was denied its quivering thrill. Again, this was not a bad performance (particularly when compared with the Prokofiev), but it was hardly something to flip for.

You might have flipped—or at least stood—for Sakari Oramo, the young Finn who guest-conducted one subscription concert. The former concertmaster of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, he is now chief of that orchestra, as well as of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, in England. (It's he who replaced Sir Simon Rattle, now with the Berlin Philharmonic.) Oramo led a program of Sibelius—sure—Kaija Saariaho (another Finnish composer, contemporary), and Tchaikovsky (the "Manfred" Symphony). By the evidence, Oramo has all the tools: intelligence, discipline, leadership. This is a conductor who knows his mind, is of sound mind, and has the wherewithal to express what's on his mind. There seems to be no limit to what he can accomplish. Sakari Oramo could be the ticket—if a ticket were needed.

Finish with the Metropolitan Opera, which laid on a sumptuous, spiritual, moving performance of *Tannhäuser*. No, music director James Levine was not in the pit, and it is always a shame to do a Wagner performance without your music director, if he is the best Wagner conductor in the world, and one of the greatest of all time. But Mark Elder, the British maestro, sufficed. Interestingly, he was perhaps least strong in the Overture, which was bland and meandering, rather than gripping and inexorable. Elsewhere, he might have provided more definition, more sweep, but he did justice to Wagner's score, an achievement.

The tenor in the title role was Peter Seiffert, who did not have a good night, but who had a passable night. He is a relatively lyrical Wagnerian, not a barker, and he has this interesting trait: Even when he is singing badly—struggling—he sings confidently, as if there were no problem at all. This is a valuable mindset. It reminds me a little of what French-horn players say: You can't worry about this crack or that, because you have more playing to do; you can't afford to wring your hands; if you're going to crack, crack with confidence! In the course of the evening, Seiffert conveyed some of the internal journey of Tannhäuser: the troubled man, the broken man, and the redeemed man.

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The mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung made a satisfactory Venus (looking the part, for one thing). Along with Seiffert, she could have made more of Wagner's notes and words—what juicy opportunities for singers—but she was never inept. Singing Elisabeth was the Elisabeth of our time, Deborah Voigt. The role begins with the aria "Dich, teure Halle," and I was reminded that James Levine's twenty-fifth-anniversary gala, back in 1996, began with Voigt in this aria (after Levine had led the orchestra in the *Rienzi* overture). The "Dich, teure Halle" of this *Tannhäuser* was not Voigt's best, with some top notes a little low, but she assumed her glory as the night progressed. Her prayer in Act III was eloquent and poignant.

The great Kurt Moll was on hand, as Hermann, and he had a poor night, repeatedly off pitch, but he projected tons of authority, which mattered. And I should mention the boy singing the Young Shepherd—James Danner. He piped confidently and correctly, and, when taking his bow, flashed a world-class smile—all teeth. It was then that I recognized him: He was the boy who sang with Debbie Voigt at her Christmas concert, with the New York Philharmonic, in December 2003. Bigger in body, and stronger of voice—same smile.

The Met's *Tannhäuser* was made—really made—by the Wolfram of Thomas Hampson. Go to the opera house for a hundred years, you will not hear or see a better Wolfram. Hampson was in superb voice, utterly secure, and he was perfectly aware of everything that was going on. He is one of the few opera singers who act other than when they are singing; he is the complete operatic package. He gave a clinic in clear, direct communication, seeming actually to talk to Tannhäuser—to reason with him. His "Evening Star" song was a wonder—a line-hugging wonder, and a startlingly holy moment. We were watching a big, splashy Wagner opera, but we might as well have been in a recital hall.

How about the production? It was that fashioned by the ever-amazing Otto Schenk, in 1977. Venusberg is the scene of erotic couplings, and triplings, and quadruplings—it was sometimes hard to tell. Perhaps the finest moment of this *Tannhäuser* occurs in Act III, when the protagonist is tempted to return to Venusberg. We see that physical Venusberg—the goddess and the rest in the background—but we have the impression that this is a state of Tannhäuser's mind, not a matter of geography.

This was a performance whose whole was greater than the sum of its parts. It had the power of convincing you that *Tannhäuser* is as good as anything Wagner ever wrote—a high point of craft and inspiration. Almost as good as the Bartók string quartets!

Opera note

Handel's *Rodelinda* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

Handel's *Rodelinda* (1725) has always been one of his most famous operas, with much magnificent music. When it was performed in Gottingen in 1920, it marked the beginning of the Handel opera revival. The opera centers on the abandoned queen Rodelinda (whose defeated husband has fled and is presumed dead), and who is laid siege to by the usurping king. Her steadfastness in protecting herself and her young son—through tribulation and through six superior arias of contrasting emotional states—is rewarded when her husband returns and, after a procession of plot devices, regains his throne. All ends happily, with the double-dyed villain (not the usurping king, but his henchman) dead and the usurper repenting his misdeeds.

Nicola Haym's libretto—essentially a string of ABA arias with one lovely duet thrown in—is, despite the convolutions of the plot, fairly straightforward onstage. The Metropolitan Opera's production, which I heard December 2, can be listed as one of its finest in the past few seasons. Very well sung throughout, it was staged with great care and imagination by Stephen Wadsworth

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(who staged the excellent Seattle *Ring Cycle*). He is one of America's premier directors of opera. He always works from the inside out: that is, he begins with character, with real people caught in real situations. Even in as artifice-driven an art form as opera seria, Wadsworth creates a consistent naturalness—intimacy bordering on verismo realism. Genre touches throughout the evening—gardeners planting flowers, masons constructing a memorial—are never obtrusive, and fit into the larger story. The constant passing of dark-costumed soldiers effectively provides that aura of police-state menace. Such marvelous touches as his handling of Rodelinda's son Flavio (beautifully acted by Zachary Vail Elkind) made him—as he is—an integral part of the unfolding tale.

In this Wadsworth was aided by the brilliant sets of his longtime collaborator Thomas Lynch. Lynch put eighteenth-century Milan onstage at the Met. The detailed sets, striking as they are, do more than just look nice (relief enough in today's opera world!). They further the drama. In the third act, the hero-fugitive Bertarido is imprisoned in a dungeon, and because of the Met's stage wizardry we are shown both upper and lower levels. On the upper level we see the usurper Grimoaldo in torment because of his vain pursuit of Rodelinda. Thus his eventual repentance is early signaled and foreshadowed, as is his magnificent aria of madness. Rarely has there been more integrated ensemble acting on the Met's stage, and rarely has that acting been better elucidated by the singing.

Opera seria is about singing, and Handelean opera has to be well sung. Renée Fleming, in the demanding central role, managed very well, although her best vocal work was with the arias of pathos and longing. These she can spin out with the creaminess of her lovely soprano. Her arias of defiance, however, do not have the same emotional impact (she also looks too nice!). They sound strained. In the great Act II aria of defiance she is saved by the overwhelming drama of the scene: she has agreed to marry the usurper on condition he kills her son before her eyes, a horrific act he cannot bring himself to commit.

The countertenor David Daniels (as Bertarido) sang a heartbreaking first aria and was strong throughout (his duet with Fleming put one in mind of Richard Strauss's writing in *Rosenkavalier*), and the countertenor Bejun Mehta (as Bertarido's friend Unulfo) dispatched coloratura with aplomb. The tenor Kobie van Rensburg (as the usurper) showed himself a first-rate Handelean, and effectively persuaded one of his madness and repentence, winning the hand of Rodelinda's sister Eduige, sung by the enormously talented Stephanie Blythe. What a vocal treat she always brings to performances! John Relyea's deep bass and ferocious deviltry well encompassed the villain Garibaldo.

Harry Bicket, conducting the mostly string orchestra, is a superior Handelean, and he kept the long evening going with rhythmic intensity. Not the least mark of his expertise is the restraint he exercised on embellishing the repeat 'A's of the ABA arias, allowing ornamentations that were within the abilities of the singers, and thus highlighting vocalism as opposed to squawkism (although a few non-Handelean high notes were permitted). He gave due attention to the drama of this great opera and, when combined with the superior staging created in the large Met a touching and moving human drama, well sung—which fifty years ago would have been unthinkable at the Met. There can no longer be any doubt—if there was previously—that "il grande sassone," the composer of *Messiah*, is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, opera composer, and that his time has arrived.

—Patrick J. Smith

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The media

Honor enduring

by James Bowman

"The last quarter of the twentieth century saw a very big shift," said David Blunkett, the British Home Secretary, in September 2003, "where rights were predominant but duties were secondary. There has to be a balance restored to the two." The remark, by the cabinet minister responsible for police and prisons, among other things, can be seen in retrospect as a precursor to one last July by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to the effect that the 1960s-era "liberal and social consensus on law and order" had led to crime and social disorder. Blair was historically more precise but substantively more vague than his minister about what was the pernicious and socially destructive element in the 1960s "consensus," but I fancy he would not have disagreed with Mr. Blunkett that it was the spirit of individualism which led people to put their own gratification above the good of others, or perhaps even of "society"—which Margaret Thatcher once famously said did not exist.

Last summer, a month after Mr. Blair's aspersions against the 1960s and just under a year after his own paean to duty, Mr. Blunkett's long-standing affair of the heart with a married woman was exposed in the British popular press. The woman, an American called Kimberly Fortier before the story blew up and Kimberly Quinn afterwards (when she belatedly decided to take her second husband's name), was the publisher of the conservative weekly *The Spectator*. That publication might have been expected to show a certain sympathy for Mr. Blunkett's views about the balance between rights and duties, but its editor, Boris Johnson, a married man with four young children, was contemporaneously carrying on an affair with one of the magazine's columnists, Petronella Wyatt. Miss Wyatt, a single woman, was said to have aborted their child at the instigation of Mr. Johnson, who was also a member of Parliament and Conservative front bench spokesman on the arts. He was fired from the latter post by Michael Howard, his party's leader, when the news of their liaison broke in November—just as the Quinn-Blunkett one was back in the news.

For although Mrs. Quinn had reportedly ended the affair, confessed it to her husband, and been forgiven by him, Mr. Blunkett, who is divorced with three grown children, brought a legal action requesting visitation rights to Mrs. Quinn's two-year-old son, whom he regards as his own. It was said that a privately administered DNA test before the couple broke up had confirmed this. He believed that the child Mrs. Quinn was now carrying and that was due in February was also his. She and her husband, meanwhile, insisted that both children were theirs, irrespective of "biological details," and she petitioned the court to be excused further litigation on the subject until April, after she will have given birth. Her request was denied and Mr. Blunkett's suit allowed to go ahead. "I'm naturally relieved at

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today's judgment so I can continue my attempts to gain access to my son," he said in early December. "I have never wanted anything about my private life and [the child's] paternity to be in the public domain and would never have gone to the courts if there were another way of getting informal access to him."

Mrs. Quinn, equally naturally, might otherwise have preferred to keep all discussion of what in dim and distant days past would have been called her "shame" as an adulteress out of the public prints, but in retaliation (as it seems) for the continuation of Mr. Blunkett's unwanted attention to herself and her children, she or her agents revealed to the media that the Home Secretary, whose duties also include oversight of immigration, had expedited the visa request of a Filipina nanny of hers, had hurried a passport request for her son with the American embassy, and had once given her two first-class railway tickets at government expense. There may have been other occasions as well on which she was beholden to taxpayers for benefits to which the minister's spouse, if any, would normally have been entitled. The assumption in all the media coverage of these details was naturally that such minor exercises of the perquisites of office on behalf of a clandestine lover were highly improper, and an independent investigation was ordered by the Prime Minister—who, nevertheless, expressed confidence that his minister would be found innocent of any wrongdoing.

Fortunately, all this personal history also raised fascinating ethical questions which helped to keep the British media interested in the story and presumably comfortable with their position on the windy side of their own ethical standards—such as they are. How much of Mr. Blunkett's alleged misbehavior, for instance, depended on the assumption that the principals would have preferred to keep their relationship out of the public gaze and how far could it be supposed that a similar suggestion of improper behavior would have attached to similar favors done for ordinary friends or acquaintances? Was expediting the visa for the nanny, who would have been entitled to it in any case, more or less serious as a misdemeanor than the railway tickets, which involved a misuse of admittedly trivial amounts in public funds? Concern about such matters was expressed in the press and in Parliament, and a second inquiry was undertaken by the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner. Thus a veneer of seriousness was added to what was, after all, excellent entertainment for the public.

The nature of scandal itself appears to have changed, as its use both of the old language of honor or morality and of the more recent language of celebrity has entered a new phase. Of course, it is old news that the ancient culture of honor in public life has been almost completely replaced by the media's culture of celebrity. The difference between honor and celebrity is that, where the honor culture depends on the elevation of some people above the mass of men and women, the celebrity culture depends to an equal or greater extent on bringing down to the level of the masses any who might otherwise seem to be so elevated. Thus *US Weekly* has a section titled "Stars! They're just like us!"—because, whether they are or not, being like us is what we have come to expect of stars. And that expectation is the reason for the media's concentration on the ways in which they *are* most like us, namely in their sexual, marital, and family lives. Unlike the so-called "great" men of old who were accorded their honors for being *unlike* us, celebrities are required to demonstrate their common humanity by their ordinariness, and especially by the ordinariness of their feelings. It is the price they pay, and expect to pay, for being celebrities. That's why easily slipping into and out of feelings in public, especially feelings of anger, compassion, or sorrow, has become the hallmark of celebrity as purple once was of royalty.

When in 2001 the state of Kentucky named an overpass on Interstate Highway 75, near Crittenden, after a local man whose

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sole claim to distinction was an appearance as one of the contestants on the CBS television "reality" show, "Survivor: The Australian Outback," there was implicit in the act a belief that honoring a mere celebrity was somehow more democratic and egalitarian than the élitist practice of honoring those whose accomplishments might once have been expected to set them up as being "better" than their peers. Paradoxically, the undeserving must be supposed to be more deserving than the deserving! Similarly, the ideal celebrity is one whose talents are only sufficient to such relatively undemanding tasks as reading the news, sports and weather, or acting in undistinguished but popular soap operas and sitcoms, or chatting with other celebrities on television. The price of the adulation that celebrities receive for such labors is that they are required to be simultaneously eminent and accessible, distinguished and ordinary, haughty and nice.

Certain celebrities, like rock stars, can even live conspicuously undeserving lives—or what would have been thought to be so only a few years ago. Their debauchery, drug-taking, self-destructiveness, vandalism, or bad manners may show them to be *worse* than we are, but this too is confirmatory of their celebrity status. "They're just like us" only more so, being able to get away with doing what we could only dream of doing. The only thing they are not allowed to be is *better* than we are, as this is too blatant a violation of strict egalitarian standards. In fact, as Albert Borowitz points out in *Terrorism for Self-Glorification: The Herostratos Syndrome*, to be published by Kent State University Press this month, celebrity misbehavior is just one manifestation of a cultural phenomenon which is also one of the forces behind terrorism. Like Herostratos who in ancient times was said to have burned down the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, solely for the sake of the fame—or infamy, as for him it made no difference—the act would bring him, the terrorists must at any rate be supposed to understand that it's much easier to win renown for an act of destruction than for one of benevolence or complex achievement.

A celebrity must give proofs of his ordinariness for another reason, I think, and this is precisely to distinguish himself from the heroes of the old-fashioned honor culture, of which the folk memories are remarkably long lived. In totting up his acknowledgments at the end of the introduction to his very scholarly book, *Noble Privilege*, for example, M. L. Bush said he was "indebted to the experience of living in a society where aristocratic values unfortunately remain a potent force." Even in Britain in 1983, when the book was published, such a statement seems extraordinary—and the more extraordinary for the fact that Professor Bush apparently thinks it unnecessary to spell out what it is that is unfortunate about aristocratic values. Given that Britain was then and is now governed by a democratically elected Parliament, it seems likely that what he had in mind was (a) inherited wealth—about which, of course, there is nothing inherently aristocratic—and/or (b) honor, and in particular the honor attaching to fighting and dominating others. Once again, we may begin to suspect that we acquiesce to, even wallow in, the celebrity culture precisely because we imagine that it provides a bulwark against any thought of return to the honor culture, or "aristocratic values," that preceded it.

For the same reason politicians are expected to behave more and more like celebrities by showing their emotions in public—particularly when these are such emotions as anger at a terrorist outrage or grief at the conspicuous suffering of its victims, as I argued in these pages over two years ago (see "The aristocracy of feelings" in *The New Criterion*, September 2002). The British sociologist Frank Furedi explains it thus:

> The growth of a managerial political style has gone hand in hand with a shift from politics to the personal. . . . As public life has become

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> emptied of its content, private and personal preoccupations have been projected into the public sphere. Consequently, passions that were once stirred by ideological differences are far more likely to be engaged by individual misbehaviour, private troubles and personality conflicts, from Bill Clinton's affair to Tony Blair's health to Gordon Brown's baby.

Or, he might have added, to George W. Bush's "lies" about the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD in the universal journalistic shorthand) in Iraq before his invasion of that country. In 2003 and 2004 we began to find that the political accusation which was formerly the only one forbidden in any circumstances (the charge of lying) had become the only one to achieve any resonance—partly because the language of therapy, which is so important to the celebrity culture and in which the only sin is insincerity, leaves our vocabulary of fault-finding impoverished and partly because of the need, arising out of the celebrity culture, to reduce the political to the personal.

As so often, we can *cherchez la feministe* for the breakdown of this old-fashioned consensus about the division between public and private. "The personal is the political," the feminists of the 1970s maintained, and now we are living in their world. There was, it's true, a brief period at the time of the Monica Lewinsky affair when feminists rediscovered the value of the privacy of private life. They were quick to disavow the idea that the personal was the political in the interests of the "privacy" of their favorite president of recent times. Republicans tended to see the President's sins in carrying on a sexual dalliance with Miss Lewinsky in the Oval Office as an affront to the honor of the office of the presidency.

The Right is perhaps constitutionally disposed to such views, but it was the Left—including virtually all the feminists who, up until the day before the scandal broke, had been insisting that the personal was the political—that had the more interesting and, to me, the more piquant appeal to a bygone standard of honor. In pleading as so many of them did, for a zone of privacy within which a public man's conduct, though perhaps reprehensible on moral grounds, would be presumed not to touch upon his public duties and therefore would be protected from use against him by his political enemies, Clinton's supporters discovered that there was no standard, implicitly accepted by both sides, according to which the President's conduct could be judged *or* protected, or partly judged and partly protected, unless it was a legal one. What other way of considering it was available to us?

Honor, of course, had once provided the answer. The old system of honor suppressed both feelings and morality in the name of the public good. Because our public business could not be conducted at all if it were to be conducted by saints, there was a very clear boundary drawn between public and private life, and only those things falling on the public side were deemed to be subject to the requirements of honor. It might have been thought to be regrettable that a leader should have fallen short in his private morality, but it was only essential that he should not have fallen short in his public morality—whose public nature made it subject to the demands of honor. As many commentators noted at the time, the hold-over from Victorian standards of honor lasted long enough into the twentieth century to protect the sexual escapades of President Kennedy from exposure, even though there were journalists at the time who knew of them. These were not legitimate matters of public comment in those days because the press and the political world were still sufficiently bound by that old-fashioned, gentlemanly standard by which the private behavior of another gentleman was not to be made public without the risk of incurring blame oneself as a cad and a snitch. The explicit justification of such reticence as a matter of protecting the wife and children from public scandal was raised by President Clinton, with much less

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success, in his own defense for "lying" to the public.

It seemed to me then and it seems to me now to be a pity that there was no holdover from the days of the Victorians to protect him and other public men with the tacit understanding that their sexual and other personal affairs should not be a matter for public comment. But we no longer have anything left of Victorian honor to guide us. What came between the Kennedy and Clinton presidencies was not only the women's movement and the maxim about how the personal was the political, not only the further breakdown of leftover Victorian ideas about honor and the triumph of the unofficial culture over the official, but also the success of social ambition on the part of what used to be called, with some irony, "the gentlemen of the press."

One reason that Kennedy was so successful in keeping his sexual adventures quiet was that he flattered the press by treating them as equals—all part of the gentlemen's club which didn't blab its secrets in public. With the new assertiveness learned by the media during Vietnam and Watergate, and the decline of old habits of deference, journalists since Kennedy have learned to take for granted their equality, even superiority, to the political leaders of the country. The right of the media to intrude into every aspect of a politician's life, though occasionally still justified in terms of generalized truth-telling—if all lies are equal, then a lie about sex is not to be distinguished from a lie about, say, the uses of public money—is also mostly taken for granted, as the Blunkett affair showed.

Once, honor might have thought it hardly a proper or condign punishment for his misbehavior, and that of his mistress, that they and their most intimate secrets should be made a common by-word and subject for discussion in the media among a pack of strangers—the whole nation indeed, and a significant part of the world beyond it. Like Trollope's Mr. Harding in *The Warden*, ordinary decent people might have looked with horror and sympathy on the fate of those who were unfortunate enough to find their names "bandied about so injuriously and publicly" as their privacy was "dragged forth into the glaring day and gibbeted before ferocious multitudes." But now even the principals didn't seem to mind such treatment very much.

At any rate we heard from them little of a Harding-like reticence or even resentment of the fact that people unknown to them should be talking about the rights and wrongs of behavior they had no business knowing anything about. Indeed, both parties sought to increase their public exposure as a means of lashing out at each other. Mr. Blunkett's behavior, in particular, in seeking legally to force his access to the children of another man's wife, a man whom he had wronged in a way that, back in Mr. Harding's day, would in the eyes of many have justified a challenge to mortal combat, must have seemed to a lady even today tantamount to a plea for the right to rape. So bizarre was it, indeed, that Anthony Howard in *The Times* of London was moved to apocalyptic language, saying "the distinction . . . between public and private lives can never hold up again."

Never is a long time, but it is certainly true that not only is nothing private nowadays, but we also seem to be approaching the point where there is no longer any expectation even on the part of those whose privacy is violated that anything *should* be private. There was a time, perhaps, when, as Trollope writes elsewhere, it was "not what one suffers that kills one, but what one knows that other people see that one suffers." But human nature seems to have changed since then, and public suffering is no longer a shame but a badge of honor. That's why nearly everyone now takes for granted the media's standards of public rectitude—according to which anything that any public figure wants to keep out of the realm of public discussion becomes for that reason alone *prima facie* evidence of wrongdoing. All that matters is the "truth," to which, it nearly always goes without saying, the

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world in general is or ought to be entitled to access, just as Mr. Blunkett is to "his" children.

In fact, his suit is based on precisely this assumption, that the trivial "truth" of his biological paternity should be privileged over every consideration of modesty, morality, decorum, shame, public confidence in political leaders or consideration for his former mistress, the husband she betrayed on his behalf, or even the child or children for whose welfare he expresses such solicitude. None of these things carry any weight at all next to the exigency of such truth.

It is an extreme position, perhaps, but not out of line with that of the scandal-culture of the media—which, in a new and frightening variation on the Stockholm syndrome, is now being embraced even by its principal victims. We have another example closer to home in the conduct of the recent election campaign by John Kerry and the Democrats. President Bush's electoral vulnerability, felt keenly even by many of his supporters, lay entirely in his having undertaken an unprecedented and mind-bogglingly dangerous U-turn in policy. Elected as a conservative (in every sense) Republican with a particular dislike of what he called "nation-building," Bush after September 11, 2001 could be said to have turned into a Wilsonian Democrat but for the fact that he went far beyond anything Woodrow Wilson would have dared to do in proclaiming not only a right but a duty, on grounds of national security no less, to intervene militarily to promote democracy anywhere in the world.

But Kerry chose not to attack him on this obvious point of vulnerability. Part of the reason may have been that he needed as his base a nucleus of the Left who would not have liked too blatant an appeal to conservative Republicans horrified at the thought of a president who had gone abroad, in defiance of John Quincy Adams's excellent advice, in search of monsters to destroy. But he also presumably thought that he could win by adopting the media's approach of treating all the doubts and difficulties attaching to the administration's strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan as a form of scandal.

No one had any very clear idea about what Kerry himself would have done about the terrorist threat, but everyone knew that he thought—as he frequently said in answer to the question—everything Bush had done was wrong. And by "wrong," it often appeared, he meant wrong in the sense of Michael Moore and many others of his allies on the Left: not, that is, merely misconceived but stupid, incompetent, corrupt. Charges that the President had "lied" had, though for different reasons, something about them of the absurdity of Michael Howard's justification for sacking Boris Johnson, namely that he had "lied" about his involvement with Miss Wyatt. There, however, even the media began to sense that something wasn't quite right about such reasoning. As Jane Shilling sardonically put it in *The Times*,

> If, in the future, some other member of Mr. Howard's Shadow Cabinet (or indeed, who knows, his Cabinet) were to find him or herself in a similar pickle, the thing to do, at the first whiff of a gathering scandal, would be to hoist a white hanky on a stick and come out, hands up, saying to the assembled gathering of party whips and interested hacks: "OK, lads, you got me bang to rights. It's me behind the two-way mirror in that corset and suspenders. Yup, and the guinea-pig is mine as well." And then everything will be all right, because honesty and integrity has been upheld and nothing will have been done to shake the trust of the people in their politicians. This is certainly an innovative take on the role of private morality in public service.

She means "innovative," of course, ironically, since it is now and has been for some time the take everyone has, or at least must pretend to have, on that subject—which helps to explain why the media so relentlessly pursued the sex scandals of the Clinton era even though Clinton himself was such a media favorite. Even he, it seemed,

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could not be suffered to "lie" about his private life without raising the almost literally unthinkable question as to the public's right to know, well, pretty much anything they want to know about our public figures.

And yet Jane Shilling's *reductio ad absurdum* of Michael Howard's reasoning in the Boris Johnson case suddenly didn't seem so absurd in that of Mr. Blunkett—as her *Times* colleague, Nick Robinson, showed in analyzing why, at a time when the paper published a poll revealing that the views of Mr. Blunkett's integrity held by three-fifths of British voters were unchanged by the scandal, he seemed likely to weather it. Some, Robinson noted, had supposed that it was because of public sympathy for his blindness, or admiration for the way in which he had overcome that handicap to rise to one of the highest offices of state. But he noticed a more important difference between this and sex scandals under the last Tory government, where there were still some vestiges of shame on the part of the principals. In Blunkett's case, "there has been no hiding under a coat in the back of a car . . . no nights in a 'safe house,' no flicker of shame or embarrassment. Instead, we've witnessed an awesome display of the burning indignation and sheer bloody-mindedness that has got him so very near the top. In my business you can smell weakness from 100 yards. This week we got barely a whiff of it."

I think Robinson may be on to something here. Respect for strength and contempt for weakness in our political leaders may well be the kind of cultural constant that survives even so radical a change in public attitudes as that which we see in these post-modern sex scandals. Honor in that sense—the sense, that is, of honor's origins among small bands of barbarian warriors for whom strength meant survival and weakness meant death—lives on long past such temporary cultural manifestations of it as the elder among us remember from Victorian notions of sexual propriety. Senator Kerry's failure successfully to exploit the media's willingness to dig up scandal in the Bush administration or the president's personal life may have been owing to the same survival. Even if we have forgotten it, or forgotten how to articulate it, we still know at some more basic, quasi-instinctual level that what ordinary people not on the media bandwagon care about in their public servants is not morality but honor. President Bush seems instinctively to have understood the continuing relevance of wild or primitive honor to our highly sophisticated and democratic politics during the campaign by resisting the media's demands that he publicly confess his mistakes in office and apologize for them.

He must have understood, perhaps even more clearly than Blunkett, that for all the media's demands for feelings and vulnerability on the part of those to whom they offer the dubious blessings of their spotlight, there is deep within even those who are otherwise happy to attend to the scandal follies an atavistic respect for strength above all other qualities in political leaders—particularly in times of national peril. This respect is itself so strong that it really doesn't care a bit about those human feelings which would seem to be, if you believe the media, *all* anyone cares about anymore.

Yet even though people today might agree that keeping sex out of public life would be a good thing, what prevents it from happening—or what prevents the media from suffering any serious censure for not allowing it to happen—is that people would view as hypocrisy any return to an idea of honor as the merely public dimension of morality. Victorian honor itself rested on a compromise between traditional aristocratic standards and the new spirit of democracy and equality that was always and inherently unstable. Moreover, traditional, honor-based societies could never be entirely at ease with individualism, and individualism was always the direction in which Victorian "progress" was tending. What would in any case have been a power-

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ful, perhaps unstoppable social force, was immensely aided by Victorian prosperity and technical progress. The rich have always been individualistic (though bound with greater or less success to the community by principles of *noblesse oblige*), and as what to earlier ages would have seemed immense riches became available to more and more people, the individualistic tendency naturally grew stronger.

That, you may remember, is where Mr. Blunkett came in—Mr. Blunkett as he was, at any rate, before his public exposure as an adulterer and possibly a misappropriator of public funds and misuser of public office. Actually, I imagine he is of the same opinion still. He does not strike me as the man to be shaken from his views by a little bad publicity, and in fact that might well have been, if Nick Robinson was right, the very quality most likely to preserve him in office. You could tell by the admiring way in which the Sunday *Times* editorialized, "For a man whose political future is in the balance, David Blunkett is showing almost Churchillian defiance." Well, why not? What else have our politicians to be heroically defiant about but the media's demands that they demonstrate their humanity by public suffering? When Blunkett fell anyway, in mid-December, it was assumed to be because his Churchillian qualities ran out, after he was forced to apologize for some remarkably ill-timed criticisms of his ministerial colleagues, published in an authorized biography. Ah, a charming weakness at last!

Others said that it first became clear that Mr. Blunkett had to go when he appeared at a Christmas party attended by Labour MPs and sang "Pick Yourself Up," from the movie *Swing Time*. Fans of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers will remember that this song includes the lines:

> Will you remember the famous men
> Who had to fall to rise again
> So take a deep breath
> Pick yourself up
> Dust yourself off
> Start all over again

Small wonder that a Labour colleague thought the song showed Blunkett to be "seriously unbalanced." For what kind of man nowadays believes himself to be *that* kind of "famous man"? To the extent to which we still live in an honor culture, its first honorable principle is never to acknowledge that we still live with and still care about honor.

Editor's note: Our December issue neglected to mention that Robert Conquest's *Whys of Art* was excerpted with permission from his *Dragons of Expectation*, forthcoming this month from W. W. Norton & Company.

Mark Steyn's column on the theater will return next month.

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Books

Tom Wolfe's school days

by Brooke Allen

Tom Wolfe is widely acknowledged to be one of the great journalists of his era, but his reputation as a novelist has never been as firm. He took a famous drubbing from his contemporaries John Updike, Norman Mailer, and John Irving, "serious" novelists all, who claimed that Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987) and *A Man in Full* (1998) were not literature but mere entertainment. Wolfe suggested that his eminent colleagues might just have been jealous of his novels' popularity; none of the literature written by these giants, after all, could boast sales figures anywhere near his own. I suspect that he was right. There is more than one way to write a novel, after all—and more power to those who bend the genre a bit. Besides, *Bonfire of the Vanities* and *A Man in Full* were so spectacularly readable that it was hard to care, much, where or whether they fit into the literary canon.

His third novel, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, is less successful on every level.[1] It is still readable, certainly, and Wolfe retains his unequalled ear for up-to-the-minute dialogue, jargon, and slang, and his unerring nose for pretension in all its guises. Here, for instance, he catches the sound—to call it conversation would be stretching it—of a bunch of college students waiting in line to get into a concert, babbling in what Wolfe calls "fuck patois."

He catches the tone, as always; nevertheless, there is a falling off in the work as a whole. While *A Man in Full* was bloated, *I Am Charlotte Simmons* is, at 676 pages, grossly obese: Wolfe's purposes could as easily have been served in half that length. Instead of keeping it brief and pithy, like his best work (*Radical Chic*, *The Painted Word*, and other classics), he has gone in for lazy repetition. If something is funny or makes a good point, he seems to think, why not say it twice—or three times, or four? Finally, he commits the inexcusable sin of stating, and then repeating, the obvious.

With this new novel, as everyone must know after the media blitz that accompanied its publication, Wolfe has taken on the subject of twenty-first-century college life. He invested a huge amount of effort and research into the project, visiting many campuses across the country, including Stanford, Duke, UNC Chapel Hill, and the University of Michigan. The result is the fictional Dupont University, a cross between Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Duke, and various other high-ranking institutions. The very name "Dupont" reeks of status, and the Dupont man (or woman) can hardly help wallowing in understandable hubris:

> Dupont! Science—Nobel winners! whole stacks of them! [reflects a creepy frat boy named Hoyt Thorpe] . . . although he couldn't exactly remember any names . . . Athletes—giants! national basketball champions! top five

1 *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, by Tom Wolfe; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 688 pages, $28.95.

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> in football and lacrosse! . . . although he found it a bit dorky to go to games and cheer a lot . . . Scholars—legendary! . . . even though they were sort of spectral geeks who floated around the edges of collegiate life . . . Traditions—the greatest!—mischievous oddities passed from generation to generation of . . . *the best people!* A small cloud formed—the rising number of academic geeks, book humpers, homosexuals, flute prodigies, and other diversoids who were now being admitted . . . Nevertheless! There's *their* Dupont, which is just a diploma with "Dupont" written on it . . . and there's the *real* Dupont—which is *ours!*

Into this firmament steps Wolfe's heroine, Charlotte Simmons, an innocent in the tradition of Voltaire's Candide—or, more properly, Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg's Candy, for she is almost as clueless, and her adventures almost as lubricious, as that cutie's. Charlotte is a little hick from a North Carolina hollow. An academic prodigy, she has been sheltered from the cruder aspects of modern life by her rigorous studies and her conservative, religious family. When she arrives for her freshman year at Dupont this dewy virgin is ripe for deflowering. Who will have the privilege? And will Charlotte's ideals, and her future as a scholar, survive?

There are three competitors for Charlotte's bed, and through these boys Wolfe brings together separate and competing strands of university life. First there is Adam Gellin, best classified as the aforementioned academic geek. Adam aspires to a Rhodes Scholarship and a glorious future as a public intellectual, but he is low on both the social and financial totem poles at Dupont, and his life there amounts to a series of petty humiliations. Next is Jojo Johansen, famous as the only white starter on the great Dupont basketball team. Despite his Olympian status on campus, Jojo is disarmingly humble. He has cruised through college on the strength of his athletic prowess; his fitful if genuine interest in academics has been thoroughly discouraged by the formidable Coach Roth and mocked by the rabid anti-intellectualism of the other athletes.

Finally there is the consummately repulsive Hoyt Thorpe. He is the handsomest boy in the "best" frat on campus, and hence inhabits the very empyrean of Dupont's social system, though he contributes nothing to campus life beyond drinking beer, watching ESPN, and waiting for the day when he will assume his birthright by joining a high-profile investment bank. A cross between Cary Grant and Hugh Grant, with a nasty sneer pasted across his face—one imagines him looking rather like Robert Chambers, the preppie murderer—Hoyt is a scumbag. Needless to say, he is irresistible to Charlotte, who despite her initial academic success soon falls behind in her studies as she gets caught up in the campus's overheated sexual atmosphere and the female students' all-encompassing activity, "The *hunt*! The *hunt*! The boyfriend! Necessary as breathing! What academic achievement, what soaring flight of genius, even a Nobel Prize in neuroscience, could ever be as important!"

The material is delicious, and Wolfe's observations are as sharp as ever, but he has ruined *I Am Charlotte Simmons* by trying to write two different books and succeeding in neither. The first book is a straightforward social satire about campus life. This is a genre that comes naturally to him, but it falls flat in *Charlotte Simmons* because he is unable to communicate his own point of view to his readers. Students are sex-obsessed and promiscuous—true. Their bacchanalias are disgusting—true. Small-town innocents like Charlotte get debauched—true. But is Wolfe really as surprised as he claims, and as disgusted? Sure, campus life is different from what it was when he attended college fifty years ago, but I find it—at least as he describes it—substantially unchanged from my own time as a freshman thirty years ago. Boys don't ask girls out on "dates," but then they didn't in the 1970s, either. Students only use their first names when they introduce themselves to one another: Charlotte's was, says Wolfe, "the first generation to go

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through life with no last name." No, I would actually say it's about the third; I can remember my own parents making exactly the same comment to me in about 1974. The truth is that the real changes in student life and behavior must have occurred back in the Sixties, and it's a little surprising that Tom Wolfe of all people, who has built a huge career by keeping his finger on the nation's social pulse, hasn't understood this. Just where has he been for the last forty years? Certainly not hanging out on college campuses, or even seeing popular campus movies like *Revenge of the Nerds* or *Animal House* (made in the Seventies, set in the early Sixties).

It is true that the culture has been further vulgarized in recent years. When I was in college and even high school the word "fuck" was certainly not uncommon, but neither did anyone—even fraternity scum—speak in "fuck patois." And while dorms were coed in my day, we female students did not have to submit to the ultimate barbarity of the coed bathroom, of which Wolfe gives brilliantly graphic descriptions. Women's liberation has achieved many wonderful things, but I can't think of any woman who feels that having to share a bathroom with a man, even with a beloved husband, can really be seen as a step forward.

The second book that Wolfe has tried to write, alongside his campus satire, is a novel that explores his pet interest: the recent work done in neuroscience which seems to suggest that the structure of the human brain is comparable to an analog chemical computer and that what we have been pleased to call our "souls" or our "selves" simply do not exist. *I Am Charlotte Simmons* is, in this context, immediately seen to be an ironic phrase; Charlotte, who had been thoroughly drilled in her own brilliance and exceptionality by besotted teachers and parents, repeats this mantra with increasing hopelessness as it becomes ever clearer that she is in no way unique. She does not have, Wolfe seems to be saying, a soul: she is simply a young female programmed to do what young females do. As Wolfe himself wrote several years ago in his popular essay "Sorry, but Your Soul Just Died," studies have shown that "teenage girls, being in the prime of their fecundity, are genetically hardwired to be promiscuous and are as helpless to stop themselves as rabbits."

Wolfe has read fairly deeply into the literature of neuroscience, and once we are aware of his agenda, his novel's theme and construction become a little obvious. The Dupont students are crude creatures, intent only on obtaining the following: sex, food, stimulation (artificial or otherwise), and prestige. Prestige is important not only in its own right but as a means of attracting more sexual partners. Academic prowess brings, for primal reasons hardwired into the brain, less prestige than good looks, athletic skill, or that indefinable *je ne sais quoi* currently known as "cool." Boys and men go through countless ritual challenges and tests of masculinity designed to establish their place on the prestige-scale. Girls are genetically programmed to try to obtain the man with the highest possible prestige, and Charlotte, like so many others, ultimately finds that her own prestige derives not from her achievements but from her partner, who is essentially nothing but a trophy (as she is herself by virtue of her looks and fecundity).

All this might be true and probably is, but it doesn't make for very good fiction. One might even say that the death of free will is the death of fiction, reducing characters to computers and action to reaction. The supposedly brilliant Charlotte is just about the dumbest heroine we've seen in years, with as little self-control or self-understanding as the most vacuous of the sorority chicks she scorns. When she ends up as merely the pretty girlfriend of a high-status male, we're not only not surprised, we're not even sorry, having become thoroughly sick of the smug, narcissistic little dope.

But if *Charlotte Simmons* is a disappointment, it is only one in terms of Wolfe's generally high standards. The book is

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laugh-out-loud funny on almost every page, and occasionally makes points about college life, and by extension American culture generally, that really need to be made. Here, for example, Dupont's president muses on the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings, treated reverently by parents, students, and college administrators alike.

> *U.S. News & World Report*—what a stupid joke! Here is this third-rate news weekly, aimed at businessmen who don't like to read, trying desperately to move up in the race but forever swallowing the dust of *Time* and *Newsweek*, and some character dreams up a circulation gimmick: Let's rank the colleges. Let's stir up a fuss. Pretty soon all of American higher education is jumping through hoops to meet the standards of the marketing department of a miserable, lowbrow magazine out of Washington, D.C.! Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Dupont—all jumped through the hoop at the crack of the *U.S. News* whip! Does *U.S. News* rate you according to how many of the applicants you offer places to actually enroll in your college and not another? Then let's lock in as many as we can through early admissions contracts. Does *U.S. News* want to know your college's SAT average? We'll give it to them, but we will be "realistic" and not count "special cases" . . . such as athletes.

This is the kind of straight-shooting we have come to expect from Wolfe, and there is just enough of it to make *I Am Charlotte Simmons* worth looking at—if not worth looking at too seriously.

Dizzy's dominion

Christopher Hibbert
Disraeli: A Personal History.
HarperCollins, 401 pages, £25

reviewed by David Pryce-Jones

Britain during the nineteenth century was virtually free from the revolutionary turmoils that so weakened political and economic progress in continental Europe. Several factors favored Britain, but foremost among them was the transformation of the Conservative party from an interest group of landowners into a modern electoral machine appealing to a popular base. This was the work of Benjamin Disraeli, familiar to the nation as Dizzy. To be sure, he took great pleasure in the sport of "dishing the Whigs," and was gratified to climb to the top of what he called "the greasy pole," but he also had a vision of a country held together by common values and a belief in its own greatness. "The Tory party in this country," he wrote in words that are as pertinent as ever,

> is the national party, it is the really democratic party of England. It supports the institutions of the country, because they have been established for the common good, and because they secure the equality of civil rights, without which, whatever may be its name, no government can be free, and based upon which principle, every government, however it may be styled, is in fact a Democracy.

A more unlikely Tory democrat than Disraeli can hardly be imagined. The mystery of the man and his story fascinates. Born in 1804, he was the son of Isaac Disraeli, author of *Curiosities of Literature* and many other works well known in their day but now long forgotten. Benjamin Disraeli was the only Prime Minister of the century not to be educated at Eton or another of the great schools. He seems largely to have taught himself the classics. Like so many of his generation, he grew up under the shadow of Byron. It was an unforgettable thrill for him one day to row on Lake Geneva with the boatman who had taken Byron out in the storm grandiosely written up in *Childe Harold*. The Alps surrounding the lake looked "painfully sublime." The attitudes, and even the idiom, of the Romantic Movement lasted all his life.

Respectable people said of Disraeli, as they said of Byron, that he was an adventurer, a coxcomb, impudent, a fop, dis-

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reputable, scandalous. His attire was outrageous, almost fancy dress. His fingers were covered with rings; his hair fell in ringlets. Hopelessly extravagant, he was almost always in debt, absolutely careless with his creditors. And he wrote novels, romans à clef, their characters easily identifiable. The day he ceased to be Prime Minister, he sat down to complete a novel with a "fizz" to it, to use the image of one critic. In similar circumstances, Gladstone sat down to write a tract on an issue of the Church. The distance between the two arch-rivals of Victorian politics could not be symbolized more tellingly.

Finally, Disraeli was Jewish, though he converted to Christianity in boyhood, which was just as well, as Jews were then excluded from parliament. "The Jew d'esprit," people laughed. One paper marked the beginning of his career in parliament by insulting him as an "insolent Hebrew varlet," and commentators and cartoonists were still slandering and libelling him in that style when he was a national celebrity. Carlyle thought him a "Hebrew conjuror," and even Henry James was to call him "a tawdry old Jew." Disraeli was "all over an eastern Jew," according to Bishop Wilberforce. Lady Palmerston, wife of a prime minister, wrote, "We are all dreadfully disgusted at the prospect of having a Jew for our Prime Minister." "Is it not disgusting to think of handing over [the government] to that Jew?" asked Mrs. Gladstone when Disraeli crushed her husband in the 1874 election. It was not a compliment when Gladstone himself dismissed Disraeli as someone of "Judaic feeling."

Dizzy, surely, was a nickname that familiarized the man affectionately, and a surprised but pleased sense of his national popularity seems to have encouraged him. The more anti-Dizzyites threw his Jewish origin in his face, the more defiantly proud of it he became. He claimed for himself a grand Sephardi lineage that biographers have shown to be a fantasy. Several of his novels romanticize Jews and their role in history. One contemporary, Sir John Skelton, wrote a portrait of him that contains a brilliant insight, "England is the Israel of his imagination." Bismarck expressed it in his approving way at the Berlin Conference in 1878 with the famous remark, "Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann." In an illuminating essay on the difficulty of being Jewish at the dawn of social emancipation in Europe, Isaiah Berlin argued similarly that Jewish pride was precisely the motor impelling Disraeli to be a conservative, in contrast to Karl Marx, who at that same moment was repudiating his heritage to the point of adopting anti-Semitism. Radically opposed as this pair might seem, both needed "a uniform," in Berlin's metaphor, in order to pass in their societies.

So extraordinary a man has attracted excellent biographers. Published in the early twentieth century, the six volumes by W. F. Monypenny and George Buckle are classics, with testimonies from people still able to recollect Disraeli. Robert Blake's *Disraeli* (1966) must be one of the most thorough and rewarding portraits of any British politician. More recently, Stanley Weintraub and Jane Ridley have written distinguished studies. Joining this company, Christopher Hibbert has nothing particularly new to say, but dramatizes the life by making good use of Disraeli's copious published correspondence, with well-chosen and extensive extracts from Monypenny and Buckle, and Blake, too. This is the work of an admirably professional popularizer of history, whose previous books include studies of Queen Victoria, Napoleon's women, and the city of Rome.

Talent alone carried Disraeli up the social scale. A burst of youthful radicalism was soon forgotten. Elected to parliament, he struck others as impassive, sitting motionless for long stretches and giving nothing away. Once speaking, however, he had the ability to master an argument and the wit to score off opponents. Never a cozy colleague, he had to destroy the Conservative government of Sir Robert Peel before he himself could take the party over. Not surprisingly, many believed that he did so out of ambition rather than principle. Peel,

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it was reported, was simply unable to reply to Disraeli's attacks in parliament, while later Gladstone was said to turn pale when Disraeli savaged him. In a memorable example of his wit, Disraeli quipped that he didn't mind if Gladstone had the ace of trumps up his sleeve, but he did mind that Gladstone thought God had put it there.

Skirting the politics, Hibbert concentrates on the personality. Disraeli certainly devoted much time to courting the Tory grandees, visiting the great houses of England and being an entertaining guest. With a few exceptions, the dukes and earls had no idea what to make of him, but grasped that he could speak for them in a way they could not for themselves, putting the conservative case with an eloquence and persuasiveness they did not have. Following Robert Blake, Hibbert concludes that Disraeli really did come to see himself as belonging to the aristocratic order: "He had a fundamentally patrician outlook."

Disraeli played up outrageously to women. Towards the end of his life, he told Lady Bradford, with whom he was flirting, "I owe all to women." His conquests included some very grand ladies indeed, probably including Lady Londonderry, one of the grandest of all. A Mrs. Sarah Willyams, herself of Sephardi origins, wrote out of the blue one day to say that she had no children and proposed leaving him her fortune, which was large though not large enough to solve his financial profligacy. Mary Anne Lewis was a widow, and older than Disraeli when they married. "Dizzy married me for my money," she was to say, "But, if he had the chance again, he would marry me for love." Hibbert paints an attractive picture of this eccentric and outspoken lady, and the happiness she and her Dizzy undoubtedly shared.

In Disraeli's mind, Queen Victoria was "the Faery," after Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. He flattered her egregiously, laying it on with a trowel, to repeat one of his numerous expressions which have become clichés. A spell was cast over this most influential of the women in his life. "It is settled; you have it, Madam!" he wrote to her after arranging for the government to buy shares in the Suez Canal. He invented her resounding title of Empress of India, and acquired Cyprus for her to rule over. None of the stiff dukes and earls, and certainly not Gladstone, could have persuaded her to accept so gladly either the Tory democracy or the Empire that he was meanwhile putting in place.

Disraeli's death provoked Gladstone to the mean-spirited reflection, "As he lived so he died—all display without reality or genuineness." In their very different ways, both were great men, but more of Dizzy survives today than of Gladstone, in the nation's view of itself and what it means to be British. The career can be described, as Hibbert does so well, but the how of it, and the why of it, remain as amazing and mysterious as ever.

Rara avis

Richard Rhodes
John James Audubon:
The Making of an American.
Knopf, 516 pages, $30

reviewed by Michael J. Lewis

The threads of John James Audubon's achievement—scientific, commercial, and artistic—are coiled so tightly that they can scarcely be separated. Nor should they be, for once disentangled, Audubon's talents unravel into nothingness. The scientist was a precocious amateur with a knack for field work—no more; the businessman was a bungler, the perpetual victim of his own negligence; and even the artist was at best a fluent draftsman, who wisely learned to work within his fairly narrow limits. But once Audubon brought these three diffident personae into alignment, he became a prodigy, and the creator of America's greatest work of graphic art, *The Birds of America* (1827–1838).

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The scope of Audubon's book was staggering: 435 plates were drawn and executed, which depicted a grand total of 1065 birds and described 489 separate species. Each was itself a feat of print-making, employing four distinct techniques: etching, engraving, aquatint, and the final process of hand-coloring. The aquatint was the most demanding, involving the immersion of the prepared plate in an acid bath to give it a richly mottled and stippled surface, so as to represent the various textures of feathers and foliage. *The Birds of America* was the last of the great aquatint productions, for the technique was laborious and was shortly to be supplanted by the much easier—and less subtle—lithograph.

But technical proficiency alone does not account for the phenomenal commercial success of *The Birds of America*. Nor can it be explained away as the perennial American weakness for sentimental subject matter, especially when presented in the terms of an unchallenging, easily digestible realism. Audubon's public has always been appreciative, if unconsciously, of his aesthetic gifts, such as his graceful and elegant sense of line. It is hardly a coincidence that his most popular work shows the most sinuously linear of birds, the *American Flamingo* (plate 431), which this year set a record for the highest price paid for an individual Audubon print: $197,900.

Now Richard Rhodes, the author of the Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Making of the Atomic Bomb*, tackles the enigma of Audubon. *John James Audubon: The Making of an American*, like his earlier book, is the step-by-step chronicle of a great project, told with urgency and momentum. Audubon was born in 1785 in what is now Haiti, the illegitimate son of a French planter. Just before the slave revolt of 1791, his father prudently sold some of his land and used the proceeds to buy an estate near Philadelphia. The boy was brought up in France, where he had a smattering of an artistic education, and upon turning eighteen was sent to Philadelphia to manage his father's lands. There he learned English in a Quaker boarding house, and to say *thee* and *thou*, a habit he retained until his death. He also encountered the tantalizing world of Philadelphia culture, coming into contact with Alexander Wilson, the author of *American Ornithology*, and the portrait painter Thomas Sully.

For two decades, Audubon was a businessman of almost comic ineptitude. His ill-fated ventures included a lead mine on his Philadelphia estate, a flour mill in Kentucky, a drawing school in Cincinnati—each of which ended in failure and flight. He was a reliable victim of fraud, to a comical extent, and lived hand to mouth on promissory notes and letters of credit. It was not a life for the faint at heart. On one memorable occasion, he allowed himself be beaten with a club by a man who had swindled him out of a steamboat, in order to be able to stab the scoundrel in self-defense.

But this hardscrabble existence gave him the executive ability that was essential to the completion of his grand project, which he hatched in 1820. Over the next six years Audubon undertook sketching expeditions along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and into the bayous of Louisiana. When his publishing proposal found a cool reception in Philadelphia, he decided to publish the prints himself, sailing in 1826 to England, since plates of the size and quality he envisioned were beyond the scope of American printers.

Audubon's struggles with his engravers, and struggles to secure the advance subscribers necessary to finance the undertaking, comprise the dramatic heart of the book. It is an extraordinary case study of capitalism in action. He raised the full amount—over $115,000—himself, supplementing the faltering subscriptions by exhibiting his paintings and even by selling the bird skins themselves. But even when strapped for cash, he continued to enlarge the contents, undertaking expeditions to the Florida Keys in 1831 and to Labrador in 1833. When he completed the last of his 87 installments in 1839, he had enrolled 161 sub-

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scribers for the double elephant folio edition (an octavo version followed immediately). A complete set cost $1000 at the time; a few years ago one sold for four million dollars.

The Audubon story is intrinsically winning, and Rhodes's witty and well-paced narrative does it justice, although he falters somewhat under the sheer mass of biographical material (Audubon was a great compiler even in his personal life, and left a mountain of letters, diaries, and autobiographical sketches). So intimate are the day-by-day records, such as Audubon's poignant letters to his long-suffering—or so I infer—wife, that Rhodes does not always step back to give us the big picture. For one thing, he might have said more about what a fertile moment this was in science. The frontier of biology was still taxonomy, the work of identifying and classifying new species according to their anatomical features—and fitting them into the great inventory of species devised by Linnaeus. For the amateur scientist, whose only qualifications were a steady pencil and a capacity for patient observation, it was a golden age. An untrained and dogged empiricist might still make an enormous scientific contribution, as Audubon did.

Because he is weak on the scientific context, Rhodes does not always take the full measure of an event, such as Audubon's 1818 encounter with Constantine Rafinesque (1783–1840). Rafinesque was an absurd figure of a type possible only in antebellum America: botanist, inventor, philologist, charlatan. Much of what he did was pure hucksterism, such as his public offer to reveal the secret of making buildings fireproof—to anyone who would pay him $1000. But like Audubon, he too was an artist/naturalist, who had made his mark with a torrent of scientific pamphlets. It is at least possible that his example suggested to Audubon how he might reconcile his joint interests in art and science. Yet Rhodes milks Audubon's meeting with Rafinesque for comic value, repeating a familiar anecdote about the botanist lunging at bats during the night.

Where Rhodes has copious sources, he writes copiously, but where he does not, he is maddeningly incurious. He says virtually nothing about Audubon's life before the age of eighteen. It is the rather skimpy treatment of Audubon as an artist where Rhodes's story is most vexing. Did Audubon study with the great David, as he later claimed? It seems impossible, but it is likely that he had some training, and here Rhodes ought to have least discussed the range of possibilities.

Audubon's fine graphic fluency was ideally suited for birds, and when he strayed to mammals in his *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, his sequel to the *Birds of America*, the results are far less satisfying artistically, although unobjectionable anatomically. In a certain sense his talent was that of a graphic artist: he presented tightly drawn forms in arresting and memorable silhouettes, strongly suggestive of action. Of course, his subjects were not active, and were usually freshly killed, but he compensated for their inertness with an ingenious device of his own invention. This was a gridded board, studded with sharpened pins on which he impaled his subjects. The pins let him affix the bird in any pose he desired, while the grid guided the transfer of proportions to paper. By carefully adjusting the pins and the pose, Audubon could calibrate the precise degree of action and gesture required. Here he imparted to the drawings—which are otherwise rather sleek and impersonal—an uncanny kinetic quality that is the result of his own years of observing birds, and their miniature repertoire of movements.

It is Audubon's ability to transmit this body sense, in an almost seismographic manner, to his prints that is the source of their enduring fascination. I found myself wishing that Rhodes had spent as much time on Audubon the artist as he did on Audubon the entrepreneur in this otherwise spellbinding and oddly moving biography.

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Starting from zero

Paul Goldberger
Up from Zero: Politics, Architecture, and the Rebuilding of Ground Zero.
Random House, 273 pages, $24.95

reviewed by Francis Morrone

No sooner had the World Trade Center been destroyed than people—politicians, the press, architects, concerned citizens—began to consider new projects for the site. Ordinarily, any development at such a scale would have been complicated enough, as these things always are in New York. But the ultimate responsibility would have devolved upon the site's owner and/or leaseholder—respectively, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the developer Larry Silverstein.

But this project was nothing ordinary. The World Trade Center was destroyed in a gruesome act of terror intended to kill as many people as possible—indeed, to kill many more people than even the vast number killed—and to cripple the U.S. economy. Thus the rebuilding became a matter of intense public concern and press scrutiny. Some New Yorkers felt that the only legitimate response to the terror would be to reconstruct the Twin Towers exactly as they had been. This had an undeniable emotional appeal. The problem was that the World Trade Center had been an architectural and developmental boondoggle to begin with, and there was as much of an emotional appeal to the notion that we could build something much better on the site.

At an early citizens' meeting convened to discuss the rebuilding, an audience member rose to suggest that we should just hand the project over to Frank Gehry. After all, had not *The New York Times* and other authorities proclaimed him our greatest living architect? At that point, one knew that this was going to be an architectural three-ring circus.

In *Up from Zero*, Paul Goldberger, the architecture critic for *The New Yorker* and the former architecture critic for *The New York Times*, has pulled the many diverse strands of the far-from-finished story of the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site into a coherent narrative. He attended countless citizens' meetings and, long after the rest of us had grown bleary-eyed with the whole business, kept up with seemingly every press account of the goings-on at Ground Zero.

While those involved in the rebuilding pride themselves on the "unprecedented" degree of public participation in the planning process, for the vast majority of half-attentive New Yorkers, the whole business has been mysterious. The State of New York placed the rebuilding largely in the hands of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), which was charged with working to satisfy the often conflicting needs and desires of the Port Authority, Silverstein, the 9/11 families, downtown businesses, Mayor Bloomberg, the traumatized public, and—as it turned out—Herbert Muschamp, who was Goldberger's replacement as architecture critic for *The New York Times*. The state handed the LMDC a daunting brief. Goldberger makes clear that the LMDC has done as well as can be expected under the circumstances. Such LMDC figures as its chairman John Whitehead and its master planner Alexander Garvin are good and capable men with a real love of New York and with an honest desire to do right by all concerned parties. That desire to do right goes to the extent of their willingness all along to say they have made mistakes and to take the process back some steps. This was what they did when, in 2002, they commissioned a set of studies from the New York architects Beyer Blinder Belle.

These studies were never meant to be final, but rather to suggest architectural arrangements that comported with the Port Authority's and Larry Silverstein's stated needs. Nonetheless, the half-attentive public, led by the half-attentive press, clamored for the rejection not only of the Port Authority's commercially motivated rede-

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velopment program, but also of what press and public deemed the dreary, banal aesthetics of Beyer Blinder Belle's published studies.

Beyer Blinder Belle is a firm that made its name with restoration and renovation projects, of which by far the most famous is Grand Central Terminal. When it comes to their original work, Beyer Blinder Belle is in the mainstream of what some have called a new Manhattan "vernacular" of basically Modernist buildings veneered in patterned masonry intended to make streetscapes in concert with the city's traditional buildings. At their best, buildings in this new idiom are handsome, but never stirring. The patterning is dull, the veneers brittle-seeming. Only occasionally do architects employ vague or stylized classical devices that raise the patterning to the level of ornamentation. Still, this approach values a kind of elegant dullness, not so different from that of the earlier "glass box vernacular" that devolved from the works of Mies van der Rohe, but in better keeping with the urbanistic imperatives of Manhattan streets.

That this new idiom should be standard in the age of "star-chitecture" galls the cultural trendmongers. Their constant harping has brought to Manhattan works by such international stars of architecture as Christian de Portzamparc, Raimund Abraham, Yoshio Taniguchi, Aldo Rossi, Renzo Piano, Bernard Tschumi, and, if only in the form of a Prada boutique, Rem Koolhaas, and has altered the aesthetics of such local firms as that of James Stewart Polshek. Still, for some, we have had hardly enough of fashionable architects in New York, as most of our commercial developers continue to rely on the tried-and-true as purveyed by Beyer Blinder Belle or Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Ground Zero was the most prominent building site in the world. Certain Manhattan interests would do whatever it took to ensure that whatever got built there would help New York to reassert itself as an architectural trendsetter.

To this end, as Goldberger recounts, Herbert Muschamp did something no other New York architecture critic had ever done. In the pages of *The New York Times Magazine*, he convened his own architectural competition, made up of all his favorite architects, some of them his personal friends. The idea was no less than to show up the LMDC by presenting "daring" and "edgy" works of contemporary architecture and urban design by the most chi-chi members of the profession.

I admit that I was no more inspired than anyone else by the Beyer Blinder Belle studies. But I was rather sanguine in my uninspired state. For I feared Ground Zero would become a fashion show—which, the LMDC's best and noble intentions notwithstanding, is exactly what it became. And it was not an architecture critic but a literary critic, Leon Wieseltier, who blew the whistle, though to no avail.

The LMDC chose to conduct a competition clearly modeled on Muschamp's—down to several of the architects invited to participate. Indeed, the LMDC, with but one exception, followed Muschamp's aesthetics completely, and as a result paid no heed to the vast diversity of architecture in our time. In riposte, Myron Magnet, the editor of *City Journal*, asked the Washington, D.C.-based firm of Franck Lohsen McCrery to produce a classical design for Ground Zero. One may well dislike Franck Lohsen McCrery's design, but that it is serious architecture is undeniable, and such a work should have been presented to the public by the LMDC. The LMDC's lone exception to the Muschamp canon was to invite the firm of Peterson/Littenberg to participate, though it was a foregone conclusion that their plan would never receive serious consideration. That it was also far and away the best plan seems somehow appropriate. Peterson/Littenberg's buildings were much in the "new vernacular" mode, but their arrangement among streets and open spaces partook of a "New Urbanist" methodology that sought to reintegrate the World Trade

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Center superblock into the traditional pattern of downtown streets, which was the single most sensible thing that could be done with the site. Peterson/Littenberg's plan also forswore showmanship, which one might have thought appropriate to a site of mourning. Yet showmanship was the order of the day as the starchitects duked it out.

The LMDC narrowed the choices to two. One was the "World Cultural Center" plan proposed by a firm called THINK, comprising several well-known architects including Rafael Viñoly and Frederic Schwartz, two New Yorkers who are fixtures on the cultural scene in Manhattan. The other finalist was the scheme "Memory Foundations" by Studio Daniel Libeskind.

Libeskind won. But he soon felt a little less like a winner, as, under pressure of commercial necessities, his plan was much altered, and he had to accept a partnership with Larry Silverstein's favorite architect, David Childs of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Childs had, unlike Libeskind, designed skyscrapers before—indeed, had designed so many he could probably do it in his sleep.

We incline to the belief that compromise in such situations is a bad thing. But here I am not so sure. Libeskind is a serious and talented architect. He was relatively little known to the general public before he won the competition. But he was a star among the cognoscenti, and his Holocaust Museum in Berlin is generally considered one of the most important works of architecture in our time. Before that, Libeskind had become known as one of the subjects of the Museum of Modern Art's 1988 "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition, which put an end to the 1980s vogue for classicized "postmodernism." Libeskind won the competition, in part, by his verbal rather than his architectural skills. He succeeded, as Goldberger shows us, by making his "deconstructivism" seem somehow the ideal expression of American patriotism. The Israeli architect Hillel Schocken, in a letter reproduced by the mathematician and architecture critic Nikos A. Salingaros in his superb new book *Anti-Architecture and Deconstruction*, says

> I think architects should be barred by law from talking about their buildings! The architecture must talk to the public in a purely architectural language.

I feel strongly that this should have been a requirement of this competition. Libeskind, as Schocken says, "can sell ice to the Eskimos." Any alteration by David Childs or others of Libeskind's designs will only underscore the disconnection between his words and his buildings, and that can only be a good thing. And while many people felt that the project should have nothing to do with nasty commerce, which sullies the purity of emotion, in fact the heed paid to commerce may ultimately help humanize Libeskind's violent forms.

The project for Ground Zero comprises more than just the Childs/Libeskind buildings, which in fact represent only the commercial component of the project. We have in addition a transportation component, a cultural-center component, and a memorial component. Of these, the transportation component appears by far the most promising. This subway and commuter rail station is being designed by the Spanish engineer Santiago Calatrava, who has created works around the world that transcend the structural exhibitionism of their type to exude something like poetry. Based on early drawings, one has high hopes for the transit station he has conceived for the site. The cultural buildings will house varied institutions chosen from among many that clamored for the attention a Ground Zero location would confer. The Signature Theater and the Joyce International Dance Center are slated to occupy a building by Frank Gehry, while the Drawing Center and a museum, the brainchild of Tom A. Bernstein, called the Freedom Center, will occupy a building by the Norwegian firm Snohetta. (The complex will also include cafés, gift shops, and a Pilates studio.) Finally, there is

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the memorial, for many New Yorkers the most significant part of the project.

Michael Arad titled his work, chosen in an awesomely inclusive competition, "Reflecting Absence." He is revising his design in collaboration with Peter Walker. The work combines landscape elements with the sort of minimalism that has become *de rigueur* since Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The real problem with the memorial, and with the entire manner in which the overall project has been conceived, has nothing to do with aesthetics or urbanism, and everything to do with timing. Goldberger notes, as others have, that we have designed and constructed our finest memorials many years after the events commemorated:

> But at Ground Zero, the priority of the memorial-planning process was the concerns of victims' family members, and that led to pressure to find and execute a design quickly. Concern about helping people who had suffered losses in the trade-center attack was a legitimate and even urgent priority for society, but it was not always consistent with the creation of a memorial that would have meaning for those who did not live through September 11, the generations yet to come.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 deserve commemoration. But we have proceeded at Ground Zero as though what happened there was a one-off. It may not be. And that is why we should have waited to think about its memorial.

Shorter notices

Giuseppe Garibaldi My Life.
Hesperus Press, 173 pages, $15.95

Hesperus Classics has shed a welcome light over the book world. Inaugurated in 2002 and distributed by Trafalgar Square Books in the United States, this London-based publisher has already produced dozens of elegantly bound paperbacks of some of the more obscure works in the canon: minor works from major writers; new translations of foreign classics; texts you may never see outside of old editions. Spare in footnotes, and with limited editorial content, these books are intended for the adventurous reader, not the scholar, and almost always offer welcome surprises.

My Life, Giuseppe Garibaldi's battle-log in a new translation by Stephen Parkin, briskly follows the Italian nationalist from his landing in Italy in 1848. Fed by ill-fated republican fever, Garibaldi's campaign quickly turns into a rout. His brigade beats a retreat from Rome up the spine of Italy in a bid to generate a popular uprising ("I found not a single man willing to rally to our cause"). His wife dies en route. With republican hopes dwindling, this hero of the Risorgimento escapes to America and eventually New York, where he finds work at a compatriot's candle factory.

An impatient ten years later, Garibaldi is again called to Italy. This time he follows the Count di Cavour's plan for a unified nation under a Savoyard king. The transition of Garibaldi from idealist republican to compromising monarchist reveals his maturing nature:

> Yet the time today (1859) is not yet ripe for a republican system, either because our society is still too corrupt or because present-day monarchies have managed to ensure their own survival, and so, when the opportunity came for the nationalist forces working together with those of the monarchy to unite the country, then I gave the plan my unswerving support.

Although Garibaldi has often been considered an outdated romantic compared to Cavour's modern man, the pragmatism he exhibited in the Risorgimento can be a revelation. His language, however, is another matter. Garibaldi bristles at not only the French and Austrians ("I could see Austrian soldiers walking around with their usual insolent air of being the masters"),

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but also the leading figures of the period—the idealistic Mazzini, the realpolitiking Cavour (who ceded Garibaldi's hometown of Nice to France), and the parsimonious King Victor Emmanuel II. Garibaldi's anti-clericalism could also be vicious.

> So in reprisal I made all the monks of a nearby monastery march at the head of our column and threatened to shoot them all; the bishop refused to give way, saying that there was plenty of sackcloth in Italy to make new friars, and keep the prisoners.

This father of modern Italy may never have been her spokesman. Yet the rhetorical example Garibaldi set has undoubtedly been followed by that country's outspoken leadership up to the present day—Berlusconi, no exception.

—*James Panero*

John J. Miller & Mark Molesky
Our Oldest Enemy: The History of America's Disastrous Relationship with France.
Doubleday, 261 pages, $24.95

Recall that the "rush" to war with Iraq was attended in the U.S. by an efflorescence of Francophobic fever. Our streets ran red with Bordeaux (a revolutionary excess worthy of the Reign of Terror); France was placed in an "axis of weasels"; in public discourse, Frenchmen were reduced—*quelle injustice! quelle effronterie!*—to shiftless Pépé Le Pews, reeking of Gauloises and raw fear.

For all that this reaction was condemned as boorish or "xenophobic," one feels there is a great gulf between "Chirac est un ver" or "freedom fries" and, say, Jean Baudrillard's comment about 9/11: "How all the world without exception dreamed of this event . . ." (Tell us what you *really* think, Jean.)

The question is not "Why do they hate us?" but "Why don't we hate *them?*" The answer is on display in *Our Oldest Enemy*, John J. Miller and Mark Molesky's amusing, and amusingly overzealous, study of French treachery, from the Quasi-War of 1798–1800 to Vichy France to Derrida: We don't quite hate them because it's far more fun to laugh at them.

If good humor and thick skin are American traits, leaden self-importance and sniffling pique are their French counterparts. Bernard-Henri Lévy, in *The New York Times Book Review*, called the book "a mad charge (whose only equivalent I know is the fascist French literature of the 30's) against a diabolical nation." Do you think that's any accident? Dig a bit deeper, Maigret, and you'll find the joke's on you.

—*Stefan Beck*

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion:*

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Notebook

The last great Fair

by Jeffrey Hart

In the Spring of 1939, standing on the roof of our apartment house at night and gazing due east, you could see in the distance the glow of the New York World's Fair. Sometimes you saw the colors change, from blue to green to rose and sometimes there were sky-rockets and star-bursts. You could not hear the music at that distance, but you could imagine it—and the crowds, and the fountains reaching toward the sky. "It's a thing like a fair," says a character in Scott Fitzgerald's story "Absolution"—

> Go to one at night and stand a little way off from it in a dark place—under dark trees. You'll see a big wheel made of lights turning in the air, and a long slide shooting boats down into the water. A band playing somewhere and a smell of peanuts—and everything will twinkle.

The New York World's Fair continues to be a subject for reflection for me as the decades go by. Like the historic Crystal Palace London Exposition of 1851, a celebration of England's industrial achievement (and, not least, Empire), the Fair was a luminous assertion of optimism, in the face of the Depression. It's theme was "The World of Tomorrow." It was also the last great Fair, innocent in its faith. It believed in Progress as a comprehensive idea. We no longer have that kind of belief. We believe in *advances*—in transportation, medicine, communications, computers, longevity, and so on, but not in Progress as a central animating idea, one that gives meaning to life. Just when that idea died is difficult to say. By the time the Fair was closed in the Fall of 1940, Hitler had defeated France and was bombing England. The Soviet Union had signed its pact with Hitler and invaded Poland, the Baltic states, and Finland.

Much of the technology foreseen and celebrated at the Fair has become actuality: television, interstate highways, mass air transportation, synthetics, organ transplants: Charles Lindbergh and Alexis Carrel exhibited a chicken heart beating in a large glass jar, stimulated by some machinery. Yet all these things are now touched by ambiguity. You can reach Los Angeles now in a few hours, but there seem to be fewer reasons for going there than there were in 1940. Pan Am no longer flies the great clipper-ship flying boats down to Rio. The Fair was innocent in a way that cannot be recaptured. And because we no longer believe in Progress as a metaphysical certainty, there can never be another great Fair like that one.

For a nine year-old boy whose parents had bought him a children's season ticket, and probably for everyone else who went to it, the Fair was an astonishing experience. You got off the elevated IRT train at World's Fair Station. Both train and station are still there today, though it cost a nickel to ride the train then, and costs forty times as much today. Then you walked down a broad

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boardwalk that is still there, too, serving Shea Stadium and the National Tennis Center. Neither of these entities has for me anything like the glamour of the Fair.

In the sunshine, the first thing you saw as you came down the boardwalk and into the Fair was its dominating symbols, the Trylon and Perisphere, the former a triangular spire fifteen stories high, the latter a gigantic globe a city block across, both gleaming white during the day but illuminated by pastel floodlights, playing through fountains, at night.

The Trylon and Perisphere remain in our minds today. They have become something like the archetypes Jung imagined as central to the mind. We have them in salt-and-pepper shakers, plates, scarves, pencil sharpeners, glasses, rings, ash-trays. I have a copper penny rolled oblong with the image of the Trylon and Perisphere stamped on it, a souvenir of the Fair. I wear it on a silver chain as a necklace along with a silver cross. The Trylon and Perishpere were symbols so powerful that they possess continuing imaginative life. They are both severe, timeless geometrical symbols, the signature of their era, immortal but gone.

They did not spring suddenly from the brains of their designers, the architectural firm Harrison and Fouilhoux. They belonged to a continuous tradition in modern art. You can argue that they are the culmination of that tradition. The modernism of the Trylon and Perisphere came from Europe, and was part of an aesthetics of radical simplification. Henri Matisse had held that all spatial form could be resolved into three geometrical shapes, the triangle, the sphere, and the cube. Visionary French architects of the late eighteenth century had imagined projects based on the revolutionary and optimistic clarity of geometrical shapes. Leibniz had written a political treatise in the form of geometrical deductions. (Jonathan Swift had satirized this kind of thing in *Gulliver's Travels*.) Descartes and Spinoza lurked in the background along with Leibniz. Globe and spire imagery had been prominent in designs for the Columbian Exposition of 1893 and for the 700-foot Globe Tower projected for Coney Island's Steeplechase Park. Architects and designers were aware of the visionary designs submitted in 1929 for the International Christopher Columbus Lighthouse Competition, in which a team of Russian architects—Krautikoff, Warentzoff, and Bounnie—submitted plans for a beacon tower beside a spherical structure that anticipates the Trylon and Perisphere. Of course, always present in the minds of modern designers was the Eiffel Tower, immensely controversial in Parisian circles when it was built, an aggressive symbol of modernity and the machine, its metallic simplicity an insult to the winding cobblestone streets and mansard roofs of old Paris. The Trylon and Perisphere sailed into the Fair from a thousand modernist drawing boards and easels.

The two gleaming structures were of course male and female symbols. Inside the female globe, the designers had gestated their vision of the World of Tomorrow. They called it Democracity, and it was the most popular exhibit at the Fair.

To view what had been impregnated inside the globe, the crowds approached along a curving moving stairway called the "Helicline"—note the new verbal coinages—which led them to the entrance, fifty feet in the air. The sight of crowds of people moving along the Helicline was part of the intended visual effect, repeated in various ways throughout the Fair. Once inside the Perisphere, the spectators stepped onto revolving balconies that formed large rings apparently suspended in space. Standing on these rings, they saw spread out below a six-minute vision of the future, Democracity.

According to the rules of the Fair, the Trylon was to be the tallest structure. The Soviet designers obeyed, but grudgingly. Standing on a pylon before the Soviet pavilion was an immense statue of a Worker, holding aloft a gigantic Red Star, which gleamed at night. It seemed poisonous because stars are not supposed to be red. The Worker and the stodgy, massive pavilion behind him also represented a

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world of tomorrow. The newspapers and their readers called the Worker "Ivan." He had a thick neck, thick wrists, and thick legs. You felt that if he could talk he surely would have been thick-witted. He expressed none of the aspirations I felt, even at age nine, and none of the verve, the energy, of the Fair itself. I saw him as a clod, no friend of mine.

The Soviet pavilion itself was equally alien, massive, and formal, expressive of power certainly, but not of intelligence. Its façade embraced Ivan in a vast semicircle, and was divided into eleven sections, each ornamented to represent one of the Soviet republics. Inside the building you saw paintings, sculpture, and bas reliefs that proclaimed the achievements of the USSR, and there was even a life-sized model of a station on the famous Moscow subway, which cleverly employed mirrors to give the impression of a tunnel and tracks disappearing in the distance. You could see clips of prize-winning Soviet films, mostly about wars, and also an exhibit explaining the structure of the Soviet government, with unsmiling photographs of the leaders. Like Ivan outside, the Soviet building expressed power and was not especially welcoming. It lacked any hint of lightness or grace, or, for that matter, pleasure. By 1940, in the wake of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the destruction of Poland, the whole thing, including Ivan, had been crated and shipped off, unregretted. The pavilions of Poland and the Baltic states had closed. During the summer of 1940, to the sad strains of "Finlandia," the Finnish pavilion had closed. The Nazis, knowing that the war would start in the Fall of 1939, had not been crazy enough to send an exhibition to the Fair.

Inside the Perisphere, the planners and designers had crystallized their own vision, Democracity, a version of the future intended as a counter-statement to the regimes that had emerged in Russia and Germany. It had a statue of the goddess Roma at its top, beneath her a glass wall whose steps were covered by a cascade. The Italian pavilion was a Futurist gem in the idiom of Marinetti. Yet I could sense a contradiction at the Fair between the benign rational planning of Democracity and the felt experience of the total Fair, whose energies expanded in the direction of celebration and anarchic fun.

I usually ate lunch free at the Heinz pavilion, and I still have the small green pickle pin awarded to visitors. To get a free lunch you simply kept getting in line and repeatedly ate small hot dogs, beans, soups, and other foods being served as samples. There were always bands playing and folk dancing at many foreign pavilions, and of course there was the vast Amusement Zone over by the Fountain Lake. The Amusement Zone attempted no pedagogical statement about democracy or the world of tomorrow, but it was riotously popular. Adults drank a very tall drink called a Zombie—one dollar apiece and only one to a customer, the implication being that more than one would turn you into a zombie. (Except that he already was a zombie, Ivan could have done with a couple of those.) The Fair was fun. But was Democracity fun?

Spread out before the spectators in the Perisphere, it was meant to be a well-organized, futuristic community of a million people with a working population of 250,000. These job holders lived in five satellite towns, Pleasantvilles, which were exclusively residential, or Millvilles, which accommodated some industry. Around these were green areas for agriculture and recreation. These various elements were linked by superhighways along which people traveled to their jobs at the Center, which was the business and industrial heart of Democracity. Electric power was provided by a giant hydroelectric dam, which alluded to the New Deal's Tennessee Valley Authority.

As the crowd watched from the two circular and suspended balconies, the familiar voice of radio announcer H. V. Kaltenborn explained how Democracity functioned. After two minutes, daylight faded under the great dome of the Perisphere, and as dusk

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slowly deepened toward dark the dome twinkled with stars. To a musical accompaniment a thousand-voice chorus sounded from the glittering heavens, while at ten locations on the dome you saw images of marching men—farmers in their work clothes, mechanics carrying tools—and as they came closer you saw that they represented the various ethnic groups that make up the American metropolis, here presented as an image of marching national unity. The music rose to a diapason, then subsided, and the marching men vanished behind drifting clouds. A blaze of polarized light climaxed the six-minute show. Ironically enough, the voice of H. V. Kaltenborn, the narrator of this optimistic panorama, became familiar to everyone with a radio after war broke out in Europe that September, and his nightly reports brought to American listeners news of one disaster after another. The superhighways, air travel, and other features of Democracity had to wait until after the war.

But was there not also something disturbing about the planned, rational environment of Democracity? Of course the entire presentation was thrilling, the visual and auditory effects moving, but was there not something oppressive about the pervasive idea of control in the layout of the ideal city? And did one really want to join those marching men with their pitchforks and wrenches? It was all benign, of course. The idea of the American People was not the Nazi idea of the *Volk* or the Soviet idea of the Proletarian Ivan, but was there not an uncomfortable sense of relationship—of human beings seen as a mass?

Grover Whalen, a jovial man with a prominent mustache, was a sort of emcee for New York City. He had staged the monster ticker-tape parade for Charles Lindbergh in 1927 and also put on a successful National Recovery Act parade. He had a taste for fun and spectacle, and he knew instinctively that the Fair could not be exclusively a matter of message and public enlightenment. He organized fireworks displays and light shows, and he had bands of strolling players—singers, dancers, musicians, acrobats, and clowns—moving along the many boulevards of the Fair. They played banjos, sang popular songs, danced and juggled, and they were invariably surrounded by crowds wherever they went.

The message of the Amusement Zone was anti-message. I have mentioned the one-dollar Zombie drink, consisting of several alcoholic potions, plus fruit juice, plus fruit. The subject of much adult conversation and radio comedians' jokes, possibly a celebration of the end of Prohibition only a few years back, the Zombie undoubtedly put many people in the mood to try the dominant ride of the Amusement Zone, the 250-foot parachute jump, sponsored by a punning Life Savers Company and decorated with its candy. This ride was quite startling, at least the first time you tried it. You paid forty cents and sat in one seat on a double-seat wooden bench, one of eleven such benches suspended below gaily colored cloth parachutes. In due course the contraption rose in the air, lifted rattling and blowing along a vertical cable, and you relaxed as you enjoyed a fine panoramic view of the Fair. In a short time your chute hit the top, was released with a clank by a mechanism, and suddenly dropped about twenty feet before the chute filled with air and slowed down. Those first twenty feet of free fall sobered up many Zombie drinkers. These, of course, were not the idealized marching People of Democracity.

Another major attraction on The Great White Way, as the Amusement Zone was renamed in 1940, indeed the first thing you saw when you walked over Empire Bridge in the direction of Fountain Lake, was Billy Rose's Aquacade, starring Eleanor Holm, the beautiful Olympic swimmer who had been kicked off the U.S. Team by Avery Brundage when she drank a glass of champagne aboard the ocean liner taking them to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, which would be all about Nazi Man, the *Volk*, guarded by the *Volksturm* and whatnot. The semi-circular Aquacade amphitheater seated 10,000

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people, who watched a precision water ballet, fancy high-diving, clowns, fireworks, and a light show projected on a wall of water.

Frank Buck's "Bring 'em Back Alive" Jungleland Village included a Monkey Island and 1000 simians. At the Seminole Village, Indians danced, beat drums, and wrestled with live alligators. It was memorable to stand outside the low fence and talk with a Seminole who was smoking Lucky Strikes. Unthinkable today would be Tiny Town, a miniature village inhabited entirely by midgets. Penguins in their natural tuxedos strolled on Admiral Byrd's Penguin Island, and the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee regularly tantalized the male crowds with her Dance of the Doves. There was a giant roller-coaster, Whooosh. Also a replica of an Elizabethan village and a replica of a street in Old New York of the 1890's, a bobsled ride and bump-em cars, and a woman lying on a bed who would be dumped in a tank of water if you hit a target with a baseball, and another woman who was supposedly frozen in a cake of ice but who spoke to you through a microphone. In the "Gang Busters" show you could view personal items that had belonged to Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby Face Nelson, and even the great Dillinger, and you saw the demonstrations of the latest FBI equipment, an agent shooting, and other techniques. There was a Penny Arcade and also a "Strange as it Seems" freak show, including a man who was calcifying ("turning to stone") and a boy with "alligator skin" (apparently some sort of extreme eczema). The Museum of Natural History put you in a simulated rocket and, using techniques familiar from the Planetarium at its New York headquarters, took you on a simulated trip to the Moon, Mars, Venus, and other places in space. There were replicas of Washington's Valley Forge encampment, of Victoria Falls in Rhodesia, and also of an African rainforest. On The Great White Way, one journalist wrote, the Fair "drops its Harvard accent and lapses into pure unadulterated circus." The Amusement Zone embodied that anarchy in human nature that will always, and no doubt fortunately, negate rational planning.

Looking back at the Fair, now from a very great distance, I see that though it did anticipate a great many things that we now take for granted in the World of Today, especially in technology. It also embodied what was imaginatively characteristic and exciting about the decade then coming to an end, the 1930s.

I began this recollection of the Fair by recalling Scott Fitzgerald's lyrical evocation of a Fair in his story "Absolution." I will conclude it by suggesting that in 1925 with *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald, himself a prose magician, foresaw the magical transformation of Flushing Meadows, perhaps even identifying the kinds of energy such a transformation would require. Back in the 1920s the marshy swamp known as Flushing Meadows had gradually been filled with garbage and with ashes from coal furnaces, hence its appearance in The Great Gatsby as the "valley of ashes" and the "wasteland" where Daisy kills Myrtle and all flowers die. Jay Gatsby throughout, however, is associated with the Moon, and we understand Gatsby's Moon to be the Moon of romantic transformation. At the end of the novel, Gatsby is dead, but the Moon of romantic vision rises again over Long Island, transforming the scene, as the scene would be transformed again and again, in 1939 for the last great Fair, later for Shea Stadium and the National Tennis Center, the Fair perhaps the transitory culmination of the transforming inventive process foreseen by Fitzgerald. I hold my breath when reading now as Nick Carraway says to Gatsby about his brilliantly lighted mansion, "Your place looks like the World's Fair."

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Letters

The uses of lexica

To the Editors:
I am grateful for Roger Kimball's attention to my book, but I write to correct the misleading account he gives of my testimony in the Colorado trial of *Evans v. Romer*. He is not the first to circulate this inaccurate report. My argument about the disputed Plato passage was not based on the lexicon (although I did mention the lexicon as one example of scholarly interpretation). No decent scholar's argument would be based on the lexicon, since lexica are simply records of scholars' interpretations of text, and the best scholars are not likely to be the ones who write lexica.

My actual argument was based on a study of all the uses of the disputed terms in Plato's writings and other related texts of the period. It is a good argument. It has convinced leading scholars, including Sir Kenneth Dover and Anthony Price, who have published statements to that effect. My argument, their statements, and a co-authored statement by me and Dover about the text and the issues can all be found in the *Virginia Law Review* 80 (1994), 1515–1651. When Kimball has studied my actual argument, I welcome a substantive discussion.

Martha Nussbaum
Chicago, Illinois

Roger Kimball replies:
I did read Professor Nussbaum's 137-page *Virginia Law Review* article. I also read her sworn affidavit for the case of *Evans v. Romer* and a great deal of the other commentary surrounding that case. The issue is not which scholars support Professor Nussbaum. The issue is the truthfulness of her testimony in *Evans v. Romer.* One point of contention was the meaning of the Greek word *tolmema*. The word, which *can* mean "deed of daring," is in the context of Plato's *Laws* 636c generally rendered as "crime," "shameless act," or some other morally opprobrious term. Professor Nussbaum claimed this was an unreasonable rendering. In an affidavit filed with the court, Professor Nussbaum cited the "Liddle [sic], Scott *Lexicon of the Ancient Greek Language*, the authoritative dictionary relied on by all scholars in this area" to support her claim. The blank is where Professor Nussbaum whited out "& Jones," the name of the scholar who revised the Liddell, Scott lexicon. Asked why she did this, she replied, "I use the edition without the supplementation by Jones, since it is more reliable on authors of the classical period." Neither part of this statement is true. The philosopher Robert George provided a devastating analysis of Professor Nussbaum's testimony in "'Shameless Acts' Revisited: Some Questions for Martha Nussbaum" (*Academic Questions*, Winter 1995–96). "No decent scholar," I believe, can read Professor George's article without concluding, as did John Finnis, that Professor Nussbaum's testimony was "a wholesale abuse of her scholarly authority and achievements."

Deceiving the deceivers

To the Editors:
David Pryce-Jones makes several major errors in his brief references to my book, *Deceiving the*

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Deceivers: Kim Philby, Donald Maclean, and Guy Burgess. He claims that in my account the British intelligence services "deliberately and ingeniously" sent Maclean to Washington "and fed him with disinformation to serve up to the KGB." Ingenious it would have been but it couldn't have happened, and a careful reading of my book would deny any such interpretation. Maclean wasn't under suspicion when he left London for Washington in April 1944. Not until two years later in 1946 did American cryptologists at Arlington Hall Station begin to break into encrypted cable traffic from the Soviet missions in New York and Washington that would ultimately incriminate him.

In the same vein he asserts that British intelligence allowed Maclean while in Washington to pass to the Soviets the texts of the Churchill to Roosevelt cables on the Polish crisis to "boost Maclean's standing as an agent." This is equally preposterous. In March 1945 Maclean passed to his Soviet control six cabled exchanges between the Foreign Office in London and the British embassy on the Polish crisis. Not until 1948 were they sufficiently broken to suggest to MI5 that there was a Soviet spy at the British embassy. There were no Churchill to Roosevelt cables among them. These interpretive comments by Pryce-Jones are at odds with his claim that the Maclean/Burgess defection (May 1951) forced the British to realize that they were losing the peace. As I also explain, by 1948 the Attlee government had grown increasingly aware of Soviet espionage activities in England and had given MI5 the authority to employ far more extensive counter-espionage methods in their identification.

Pryce-Jones is in error when he writes that Philby was "furtively fired" from MI6 in 1955 and was subsequently exonerated in the House of Commons by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. Philby was forced to resign in 1951 after his recall from Washington and CIA Director Bedell Smith's warning to "C," Stuart Menzies, the head of MI6, that the Agency wouldn't cooperate further until Philby was shown the door. Macmillan wasn't Prime Minister in November 1955 when he exonerated Philby while defending the September 1955 Government White Paper on the Maclean/Burgess affair. He was Foreign Secretary. A minor discrepancy? Not quite. As former Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison admitted in later years, the Foreign Secretary wasn't privy to the most sensitive decrypts held by GCHQ, the British code breaking agency in which were concealed the secrets of Maclean's incrimination by the Venona decrypts. Pryce-Jones mistakenly describes Venona as the British Cold War "successor program" to the deciphering of German signals in World War II. GCHQ began attacking Soviet encrypted communications in 1945 but that assault had nothing to do with Venona. The Venona Project was established in 1943 under another name at the Army Security Agency at Arlington Hall, VA. In 1947 GCHQ established its own Venona cell in London as an adjunct to the Arlington Hall effort, most particularly in further decrypting Soviet cables first broken by the US Venona team.

He also comments that the Venona texts have now been "published, greatly adding to the Philby, Maclean, and Burgess bibliography." This is misleading. Only selected portions of the Venona texts have been "published," but only to the extent of being released in 1995–1997 by the NSA and scattered among some 3,000 or so Venona cables on deposit in various archives.

Pryce-Jones claims General Edwin Sibert's assertion to a British journalist that Philby was used as a channel for disinformation to Moscow "was substantial enough for Hamrick." He's wrong. I explain in detail why the journalist's account of Sibert's claim wasn't correct in its facts. When considered with other documents from official British military sources, however, I suggest that such a disinformation operation was plausible, but I repeatedly emphasize that documentary evidence is lacking.

S. J. Hamrick
Boston, Virginia

David Pryce-Jones replies:

Well, Mr. Hamrick certainly has me confused, which is what I hold against the sub-branch of detective literature to which he has made this spectacular contribution. He asks us to believe that British intelligence was clever enough to engage in a successful conspiracy to overcome demoralizing espionage and treason during the Cold War. Impatience with this flattering view of our masters led me to be slapdash in the hunt for missing clues, and the opacity of Mr. Hamrick's argumentation is my only excuse.

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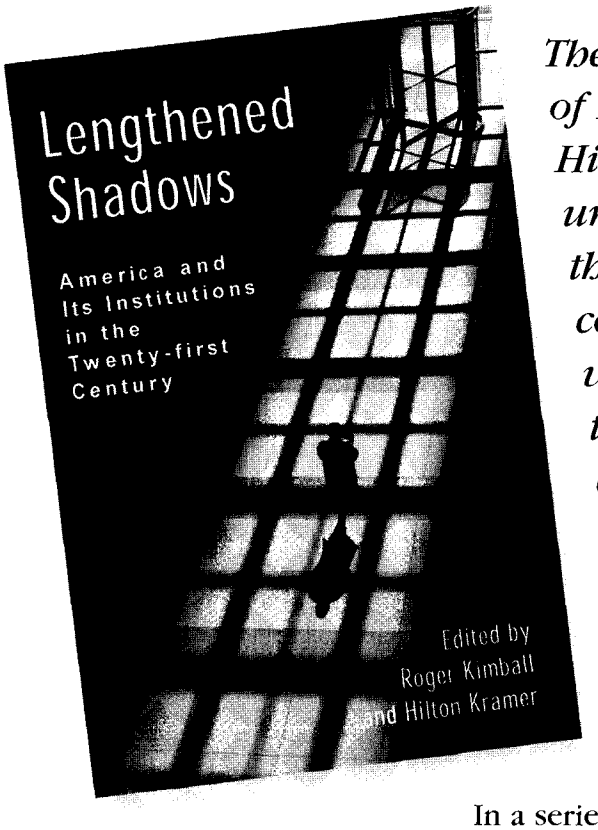

The lengthening shadow of Roger Kimball and Hilton Kramer is undeniable and so is the learning of the contributors to this volume. Their anxiety to communicate their critique is manifest; the result, brilliant and readable.

—WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY

In a series of penetrating reflections on America and its institutions in the post 9/11 world, *Lengthened Shadows* offers some answers to questions people at home and abroad have begun to ask: How did the U.S. attain its new international preeminence? What exactly is this richest, most powerful of countries made of? Where will its unmatched influence lead?

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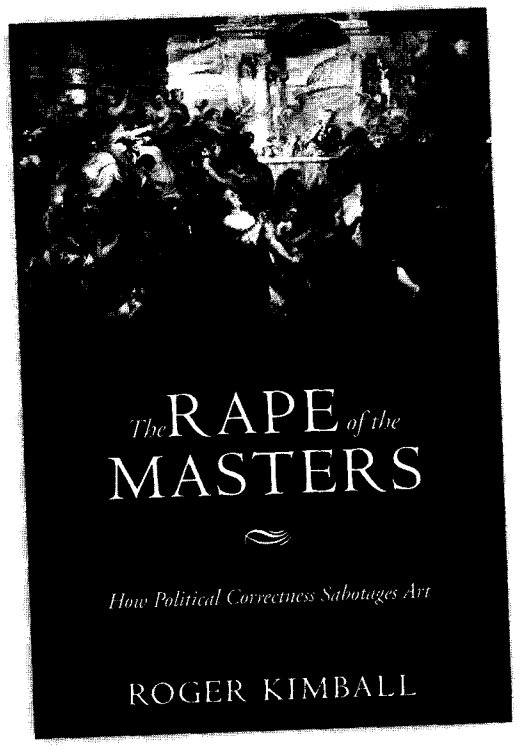

Colleges and universities used to teach art history to encourage connoisseurship and acquaint students with the riches of our artistic heritage. But, as Roger Kimball shows in this witty and provocative book, today's students are less likely to learn about the aesthetics of master works than be told, for instance, that Peter Paul Rubens's great painting "Drunken Silenus" is an allegory about rape; or that Jan van Eyck's masterful Arnolfini Portrait is about "middle-class deceptions... and the treatment of women;" or that Winslow Homer's "The Gulf Stream" is "a visual encoding of racism."

In *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art*, Kimball, a noted art critic himself, shows how academic art history is increasingly held hostage to radical cultural politics—feminism, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, the whole armory of academic anti-humanism. To make his point, Kimball shows how eight famous works of art—all of them reproduced in the book—have been interpreted by contemporary art historians to fit a radical ideological fantasy. Then, in his own exemplary analysis of these great works in which aesthetics, not politics, guides the discussion, Kimball shows how each of these paintings should properly be understood.

The Rape of the Masters exposes the charlatanry that fuels much academic art history and oozes into the art world generally. It also provides an engaging antidote to the tendentious, politically motivated assaults on our treasured sources of culture and civilization that take place in today's universities, museums, and art galleries.

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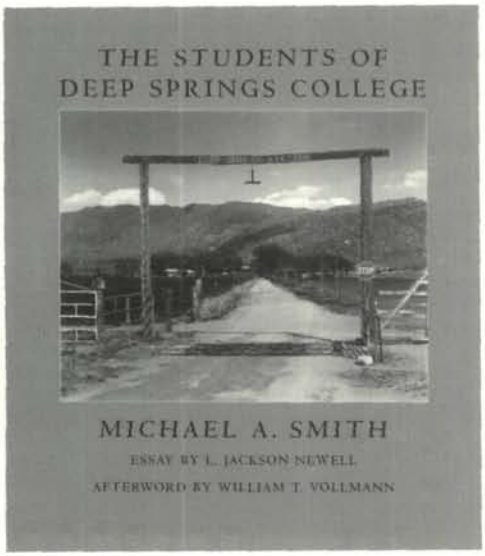

Photographs by Michael A. Smith

Essay by L. Jackson Newell

Afterword by William T. Vollmann

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The Students of Deep Springs College is an artistic gem and a superb introduction to one of America's most interesting and unusual academic institutions. This remarkable and fascinating book is an important contribution to our understanding of higher education.

— Bryce Jordan,
President Emeritus, The Pennsylvania State University

Deep Springs College is the most unusual college in America. Arguably, it is also the best. It is located in such a remote place in the high desert in eastern California that its mailing address is in Nevada—and the nearest gas pump is thirty miles away over a mountain pass. There are up to twenty-six students who hire and fire the faculty, design the curriculum, select the incoming students, do all of the work on the college's organic farm and ranch, and generally maintain the school. Tuition is free. Deep Springs has been in existence since 1917. Academically, Deep Springs is virtually unrivaled. The students at this two-year, all-male school are invited to apply from among the top two percent of College Board score achievers, though others may also apply. In a recent poll, Deep Springs College ranked third academically, behind only Princeton and Yale.

After discovering Deep Springs College quite by chance, photographer Michael A. Smith went back to Deep Springs to teach for a term. While in residence he created a superb photographic portrait of the college through portraits of the students. Smith's photographs impart a deeply personal vision and capture the essence of America's most remarkable educational institution.

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